



## GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025

Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Abolition of Caste System



### Caste Free World Conference (CFWC 2025) to G7 Summit 2025

**ESSENTIAL READINGS ON THE PLIGHT OF OVER 250 MILLION  
PEOPLE OPPRESSED GLOBALLY BY THE CASTE SYSTEM OF  
DISCRIMINATION AND CALL TO ACTION APPEAL**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025*, held from May 25–27 in Toronto, marked a historic turning point in the global struggle to eliminate caste-based discrimination. It culminated in the *Toronto Declaration*—a bold, strategic, and moral call to action for dismantling the centuries-old caste system of discrimination by birth or descent, which continues to subject over 250 million people worldwide to exclusion, violence, and systemic inequity.

Representatives of various caste-affected communities, especially Dalit from Nepal and SC/STs from India, whose participation through their governmental or non-governmental organizations was remarkable, shared powerful testimonies of lived experiences. These included persistent practices of untouchability, social ostracization, limited mobility, and intergenerational deprivation. The conference delegates voiced for realizing international solidarity with other communities such as Roma in Europe, Burakamin in Japan and other caste-analogous caste-affected communities. The intersection of caste with patriarchy, economic deprivation, and climate vulnerability was a recurring theme—highlighting the compounded injustices faced particularly by women, children, LGBTQI+ individuals, and persons with disabilities.

Delegates at the conference issued a unified call for the abolition of all forms of hierarchical social systems rooted in birth, occupation, descent, or identity. The *Toronto Declaration* unequivocally denounces any notion of caste superiority or inferiority and demands the formal global recognition of caste-based discrimination as a form of descent-based human rights abuse—on par with racism, apartheid, and slavery.

The experiences of recognized academic leaders and former UN Rapporteur on minority issues, shared during the Global Conference pointed out a clear direction that much work has to be done for protecting human rights and dignity of the communities historically discriminated by caste-system.

Crucially pertinent is the fact that the Global Conference's *Toronto Declaration* resonated with Canada's G7 Presidency under the leadership of Prime Minister the Right Honourable Mark Carney has prioritized “protecting our communities and the world.” This global alignment presents a rare and timely opportunity for G7 Summit leaders and invited leaders to act collectively on this issue. A formal letter of appeal has been submitted to the G7 Summit 2025 through its Presidency, urging that caste justice be included in the Summit agenda and global frameworks for human rights protection.

The *Toronto Declaration* lays out a comprehensive 17-point **Global Strategic Agenda**, calling on all stakeholders—including the United Nations, national governments, development agencies, civil society, academia, and the private sector—to take urgent and coordinated action. Key commitments include:

- **Public acknowledgment and apology** for historical and ongoing caste injustices;

- **Reparative measures**, such as land reform, inclusive education, and equitable political representation;
- **Legal and constitutional reforms** to prohibit caste discrimination explicitly;
- **Integration of indigenous knowledge systems** and cultural heritage into national curricula and institutions;
- **Establishment of a Global Caste Discrimination Index**, disaggregated data systems, and youth-led anti-caste initiatives;
- **Amendment of national human rights codes** to include caste as a protected category, especially in G7 and diaspora-hosting nations.

The Declaration also emphasizes the importance of truth and reconciliation processes, healing intergenerational trauma, and building transnational solidarity through inclusive policies and public awareness campaigns.

While acknowledging progress made through affirmative action and legal provisions in some countries, the Global Conference warned that impunity and inertia of general apathy on the part of law enforcement bodies even in those countries remain widespread. Without urgent systemic change, the global mission to achieve inclusive development and democratic equality for protecting communities will remain fundamentally incomplete.

As the world advances into the second quarter of the 21st century, the *Toronto Declaration* sets a moral and strategic deadline: caste and descent-based discrimination must be globally abolished within a reasonable grace period following the year 2025. This document is not merely a record of declarations—it is a blueprint for action. It calls on global leaders, especially those gathered at the G7 Summit 2025, to champion this cause with the urgency, unity, and conviction it demands.

The time to act is now. A caste-free world, without discrimination by birth or descent, is not only possible—it is necessary.

The information, documents and statements compiled in this volume reflect decades of lived experiences, cutting-edge academic research, and a unified moral vision. They include:

- The letter of appeal to G7 leaders, signed by global advocates, urging formal adoption of caste justice under the Summit's protection priorities;
- The *Toronto Declaration*, which proposes a 17-point Global Strategic Agenda for the systemic elimination of caste discrimination by 2030;
- Voices of affected community leaders, youth, women, and internationally known academic scholars offering pathways for reparative justice and educational reform;
- Calls for establishing a Global Caste Discrimination Index, integrating caste equity into SDGs, and amending national human rights codes to include caste.

## PEACE PRAYER <sup>1</sup>

O Buddha, O Blessed One, Teacher of Peace,  
Who spoke with Cunda, beneath the mango  
trees,

Guide us through the path of light,  
Beyond mere rituals, to the real insight.

Purity is not through water drained,  
Nor by fire, nor even rites ordained.  
But in the deeds of hand and heart,  
Where wisdom and compassion start.

Cleanse the **body** of three evil acts—  
Violence, theft, and lustful conducts  
Let us follow the noble truth,  
And, walk on the righteous path.

Purify our **speech** from harmful lies,  
From words that wound and tongue that preys.  
Let us speak with gentle grace,  
***Unite, not sever, the human race.***

Purify the **mind** from hate and greed,  
And wrong views that taint your deed.

May wisdom rise, and harmony glow,  
And buds of righteousness gently grow.

Ward-off craving for venal fire,  
Detach the heart from tainted desire.  
Let us live with harmless mind,  
Desire not on others' dime or in-kind.

Speak the truth with kindly care,  
Divide not hearts with words unfair.  
In Dhammic voice, the soul is seen,  
Polished bright, serene and clean.

Abandon ten unwholesome ways,  
And cultivate the virtues' blaze.  
This is the path of the noble plan—  
Towards a life enlightened, grand.

May our steps in Dhamma dwell,  
And echoes rhyme in the wisdom well.  
To Nibbāna's peace, we strive and pray,  
O Buddha, lead us on Your Way.

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<sup>1</sup> A Peace Prayer Based on Buddha's Teachings from [\*Cunda Kammarputta Sutta\*](#)

As read by Dr. Drona Rasali before beginning his welcome address at the Gobal Conference for a Caste Free World 2025, Brampton, Greater Toronto Area, Canada.





## GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025

Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Abolition of Caste System



### A LETTER OF APPEAL SUBMITTED TO G7 SUMMIT 2025 PRESIDENCY AND PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA HONOURABLE MARK CARNEY

8 June 2025

Right Honourable Mark Carney  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Presidency of the G7

Dear Prime Minister Carney,

On behalf of the **Sahayatra- International Alliance for Social Justice**, a Toronto-based nonprofit organization registered with the Government of Canada, we extend our heartfelt congratulations on your leadership in assuming the Presidency of the G7. We also commend your recent announcement highlighting Canada's core priorities for the upcoming G7 Summit, to be held in Kananaskis, Alberta, from June 15–17.

One of your three priorities, “**protecting our communities and the world**—strengthening peace and security, countering foreign interference and transnational crime, and improving joint responses to wildfires” resonates deeply in essence with the **Toronto Declaration of the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025**, which was unanimously adopted by delegates of the Global Conference we hosted in Toronto from May 25–27. The conference delegates, representing communities affected by caste-based discrimination from around the world, gave voice to the lived realities of more than **250 million people** globally who continue to endure caste- and descent- based discrimination—a profound and enduring human rights crisis.

Caste-based discrimination is rooted in a rigid, hierarchical system of social stratification that traces back over 3,500 years. Scholarly consensus indicates that this structure of caste system emerged in the South Asian region, particularly the Indus Valley, through the intersection of Indo-Aryan migrations among the Eurasian Steppe Mountain pastoralists and Anatolian-Iranian farmers making up ancient settler populations, intermixing with indigenous Dravidian communities. Caste- based discrimination has now become a **global phenomenon**, owing to ancient, medieval historic and contemporary patterns of migration.

Today, caste-based discrimination persists among **Dalits in South Asia, especially India and Nepal, Burakumin in Japan, Roma across Europe**, and other historically marginalized communities worldwide. It has also taken root in North America and other G7 countries through dispersal of diaspora communities. The consequences of casteism—social exclusion, economic marginalization, denial of access to education and employment, and routine violence—are devastating. Without confronting this entrenched system of oppression impacting mass of over a

quarter of a billion people around the world, the global mission to "protect our communities and the world" will remain incomplete.

The categorization of fellow human beings as "untouchable" or "low caste" based solely on birth is a violation of the fundamental principles of human dignity, democracy, and international human rights. We therefore **respectfully urge you to include the elimination of caste- and descent- based discrimination as a formal item on the agenda of the 2025 G7 Summit** under the theme of protecting vulnerable communities and fostering global justice.

We are enclosing the [Toronto Declaration of the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025](#), which provides a strategic and actionable roadmap for dismantling caste-based oppression globally. We sincerely hope that this document will inform Canada's leadership in the G7 and beyond, in advancing a just and inclusive global society.

Through your esteemed office as Presidency of the G7, we respectfully call upon all G7 leaders and invited heads of governments to prioritize the advancement of a just and inclusive global society by addressing the protection and empowerment of vulnerable communities affected by caste- based discrimination worldwide.

Should there arise any questions for clarification pertaining to any aspect of this appeal, we appreciate knowing them and will be pleased to respond in a timely manner.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our appeal.

With the utmost respect and highest regard,

**Yours sincerely,**

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali

Chair, Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, Toronto, Canada.

Santosh Bishwakarma

President, Sahayatra- International Alliance for Social Justice, Toronto, Canada.



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## GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025

Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Abolition of Caste System



25 May 2025

### TORONTO DECLARATION

***Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 (May 25–27), Toronto, Canada***

### **Building Solidarity Towards Equality, Social Justice, Freedom and the Abolition of Caste and Analogous Systems of Discrimination**

#### **Background**

“All human beings are born free and equal,” as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet, caste-based division remains one of the most persistent and least addressed forms of social exclusion in the world. Originating from deeply entrenched religious and feudal structures over 3,000 years ago, caste systems have denied over 250 million people across the globe—including Dalits in South Asia, Burakumin in Japan, Roma in Europe, Haratin in Mauritania, Quilombolas in Brazil, Māori in New Zealand, Sami in Sweden, and their diasporic communities—basic human rights and access to dignity, equity, and opportunity.

Casteism is not confined to its origins in modern times; it is global in its reach. From India and Nepal to North America and the UK and beyond these countries, caste-based discrimination manifests as systemic denial of access to education, employment, political participation, land ownership, justice systems, and healthcare. Women and other gender minorities from caste-oppressed communities experience compounded discrimination through intersecting axes of gender, caste, ethnicity, and economic class.

Despite some progress made, atrocities continue happening unabated, as exemplified by the following recent facts:

- In India alone, the number of cases of crimes (57,582) against Scheduled Castes were registered in 2022, with a 13% rise from the previous year.
- In Nepal, Dalits remain 9 to 14 times more excluded than dominant castes as per national data on social exclusion.
- Across diasporas, caste bias silently persists in institutions, workplaces, and educational environments.

#### **Preamble**

We, the Delegates of the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, comprising affected communities, policymakers, civil society organizations, academics, students, and international

allies, convened in Toronto, Canada, in May 2025, unite in solidarity for a just and equitable world free from all forms of discrimination, including caste and analogous systems rooted in work and descent.

This Conference marks a pivotal moment in our collective journey to dismantle entrenched systems of caste oppression. Caste-affected communities—including Dalits, Roma, Burakumin, Haratin, and Quilombolas—continue to suffer from exclusion, violence, restricted mobility, untouchability practices, and gross denial of identity and dignity. These injustices intersect with gender inequality, patriarchy, and socio-economic marginalization, creating compounded vulnerabilities for women, children, LGBTQI+ individuals, and persons with disabilities.

Rooted in principles of human dignity, justice, equality, freedom, and solidarity, we reaffirm our commitment to abolish all forms of caste discrimination and to build a world where every human being enjoys equal rights, opportunities, and dignity regardless of birth, occupation, ethnicity, descent, or identity. Understandably, identity by caste or any ethnic population groups is vital for reaffirming their existential status in the societies. However, the bottom line is that, while doing so, no caste or ethnic group has any rights to dehumanize and discriminate any other caste or ethnic groups, especially harming over 250 million peoples around the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, the abolition of caste system that undermines the existence and dignity of any caste is a must in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### We Salute

- The brave individuals and communities who have risked life and livelihood to resist caste-based oppression and claim their rightful dignity.
- The resilient women who have defied patriarchy and caste violence to assert their rights and transform society.
- The fearless youth and children who assert their humanity and resist systemic discrimination in education, culture, and employment.
- The enduring legacy of **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**, whose vision and struggle for an egalitarian society continue to inspire movements across the world.

### We Recognize

- That caste and analogous forms of discrimination persist across many societies despite decades of resistance along with legal and constitution reforms made in some countries.
- That these systems intersect with and reinforce other structures of oppression such as gender, poverty, and political exclusion.
- That impunity for caste-based violence and discrimination remains widespread, with justice and accountability mechanisms often inadequate.
- That affected communities and civil society have persistently raised their voices, yet international and national responses remain fragmented and insufficient.

## We Acknowledge

- Progress made through affirmative action, constitutional provisions, and targeted policy measures in some countries.
- The value of key international instruments, further to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as:
  - International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), 1965
  - The *UN Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent*, 2014.
  - The *UN Guidance Tool on Descent-Based Discrimination*, 2017.
  - The *Africa Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Resolution 619* on the protection of communities discriminated on work and descent, 2024.

## Global Strategic Agenda for Dismantling the System of Caste Discrimination

### 1. Formal Global Recognition of Casteism

- Derecognize and denounce any hierarchy of high or low among, between and within caste identities around the world.
- Urge the United Nations and all member states to recognize caste-based discrimination as a form of descent-based human rights abuse on par with racism and apartheid.
- Advocate for the development of a UN Covenant on caste-based discrimination and descent-based injustice.
- Especially in countries such as Canada, human rights codes must be amended to include explicitly 'caste' as the protected category along with other categories such age, ancestry, gender etc.

### 2. Effective Enforcement of Anti-Discrimination Laws

- Ensure effective legal enforcement of the provisions of recognition and protection against caste discrimination, including caste as a protected category in Canada and other nations' human rights codes.
- Establish mechanisms for monitoring, enforcement, and accountability at national and local levels.

### 3. Caste Equity Through Educational Reform

- Integrate human dignity, equity, and anti-caste values and legal provisions into national education systems.
- Introduce *Critical Caste Theory* as a framework in educational curricula globally.

- Ensure higher education institutions are mandated to conduct research and studies on caste oppression with funding made available by national and international donor agencies.
- Promote and support, through educational opportunities, native arts and heritage, visual and performing arts of traditional occupational caste people who are discriminated or displaced by globalization for improving their livelihoods and prosperity through the development of their entrepreneurial skills.

#### **4. Community-Led Empowerment and Leadership**

- Fund community-led leadership programs to empower caste-oppressed individuals.
- Ensure equitable representation and agency in socio-economic, political, and civil domains.
- Support exploring and establishing ownership of intellectual property rights of native skills, arts and knowledge handed down from the heritage of communities discriminated by caste.

#### **5. Establishment of a Global Caste Discrimination Index**

- Develop a UN-backed index to measure caste-based inequality, analogous to the Human Rights Index.
- Mandate disaggregated data reporting in national development and human rights assessments.

#### **6. Intersectional Research and Evidence-Based Policy**

- Invest in research exploring the intersections of caste with health, housing, education, gender, and labor.
- Use disaggregated data to inform reparative policy and equitable budget allocations across governments and international communities including the UN systems.

#### **7. Aligning Reparative Justice with the SDGs**

- Align national caste-reparative strategies with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Create a global humanitarian fund for caste-oppressed groups.

#### **8. Recognition and Restitution of Historical Injustices**

- Issue public apologies and provide reparations including land reform, inclusive education, and political representation.

#### **9. Socioeconomic Restructuring and Affirmative Action**

- Implement affirmative action across employment, housing, and state resources.

- Support of national and multi-lateral governmental and private sectors for establishing development banks under the leadership of caste-oppressed stakeholders.

## **10. Youth-Led Caste and Racial Justice Movements**

- Empower youth to lead anti-caste and racial justice movements.
- Mainstream indigenous arts, skills, and knowledge of caste-oppressed groups in educational systems.

## **11. Healing Intergenerational Trauma**

- Recognize and address the psychological impacts of caste trauma.
- Support healing initiatives through culture, dialogue, and community restoration.

## **12. Global Political Representation and Institutional Reform**

- Ensure proportionate political representation of caste-oppressed communities at all levels of state governance.
- Reform institutions to uphold inclusive governance.

## **13. Legal and Policy Transformation**

- Dismantle caste hierarchies through legal, constitutional, and policy reforms.
- Model inclusive frameworks on successful examples from countries like Canada.

## **14. Cultural Change and Public Awareness**

- Eliminate casteist cultural expressions and promote inclusive narratives in media, religion, and education.
- Collaborate with cultural and religious leaders to shift societal norms.

## **15. Mainstream Allyship and Anti-Casteism Training**

- Mandate allyship training for government officials, institutions, and civil society leaders.
- Promote accurate understanding of caste discrimination through ongoing education.

## **16. Human Rights Training for Migrants**

- Make human rights and anti-casteism education a standard part of immigration and integration programs globally.
- Provide humanitarian protection and asylum to those fleeing caste-based persecution and ostracization.

## **17. Truth and Reconciliation**

- Establish national Truth and Reconciliation Commissions to address caste atrocities and chart a path for dismantling caste systems permanently.

## **Conclusion and Way Forward**

As we progress through the 21st century, the **Toronto Declaration** calls for immediate, coordinated, and systemic action to eliminate caste and descent-based discrimination globally within the reasonable time-frame of a grace period after the first quarter of this century, which we consider as the deadline to end detrimental impacts of caste.

We urge:

- **The United Nations**
- **National and local governments**
- **International donors and development institutions**
- **Civil society organizations**
- **Academic and research bodies**
- **Media, cultural institutions, and private sectors**

to adopt and implement this Declaration. Let us together end caste-based oppression in this generation and ensure that no one is denied dignity and opportunity because of their birth.

**Let the Toronto Declaration be the moral compass for a caste-free world!**

***For further details, please contact:***

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## GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025

Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Abolition of Caste System



### **WELCOME ADDRESS BY DR. DRONA PRAKASH RASALI, CHAIRPERSON, GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE- FREE WORLD 2025, TORONTO (BRAMPTON), CANADA AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON MAY 25, 2025**

**Honorable and Distinguished Dignitaries,  
Esteemed Delegates, Respected Scholars, Dedicated Activists, and Cherished Guests  
from Around the World—**

**Namaste, Mino-onaagoshi, Good evening, Bonsoir and a heartfelt welcome to Toronto.**

It is with profound humility and a deep sense of shared purpose that I welcome you to the Inauguration Ceremony of the historic Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025.

Organized under the auspices of Sahayatra—International Alliance for Social Justice, Canada, in collaboration with our solidarity partners across South Asia and North America, this conference represents a defining milestone in our collective journey toward global equality and social justice.

#### **A Call to Action**

Our conference theme—"Building Solidarity Towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Elimination of Casteism"—is not merely a statement of aspiration; it is a clarion call for bold, coordinated action.

We are gathered here to confront one of humanity's oldest and most persistent injustices—the caste system, a deeply entrenched, man-made social hierarchy that continues to oppress more than 250 million individuals globally, especially across Nepal, India, and increasingly among diasporic communities in the Global North.

#### **Why We Are Here**

This historic gathering brings together a rich diversity of voices and experiences:

- Over 25 globally renowned academic and solidarity leaders from the United States, Canada, India, and Nepal
- Hundreds of grassroots activists, researchers, students, and community leaders united in pursuit of dignity and justice

Over the course of this conference, we will engage in thought-provoking discussions and collaborative planning on critical issues including:

- Socio-economic, cultural, and health disparities rooted in caste hierarchies
- The transformative role of education and activism in dismantling caste-based discrimination
- Policy-making strategies that center reparative justice and structural reform
- The nuanced dynamics of caste in diasporic communities across North America and beyond
- The intersections of caste with gender and emerging global challenges such as climate change

### **A Personal Reflection**

My own life journey—beginning in a remote village of Nepal and extending across 45 years of professional service in veterinary science, genetics, epidemiology, public health, and higher education—has offered me a uniquely broad and deep lens on caste injustice.

Few, if any, may have experienced firsthand how caste discrimination permeates all aspects of life—from marginalized rural beginnings to navigating high-stakes education and professional systems in four major English-speaking countries: Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States.

Caste-based injustice is not an abstraction. It is a lived reality—manifesting through exclusion, social stigma, and structural neglect across generations. It is this persistent reality that we gather here to confront, to challenge, and to ultimately transform.

### **Shaping the Future**

A key outcome of this conference will be the launch of the “Toronto Declaration”—a comprehensive and actionable framework designed to:

- Highlight the multi-dimensional impacts of caste-based discrimination
- Promote education and activism as essential tools for change
- Guide policy development and advocacy at local, national, and international levels
- Address caste within diasporic contexts in Canada, the U.S., and globally
- Illuminate the intersections of caste with gender, environment, and other global justice issues
- Facilitate international collaboration, including engagement with the United Nations and other multilateral institutions

But our mission extends beyond this gathering. We are laying the foundation for continued action and future conferences in global cities such as London, Washington D.C./Baltimore, and Hong Kong—to expand our movement, deepen partnerships, and advance the cause of caste abolition on a global scale.

## **A Collective Commitment**

I invite each of you to engage fully in this process. Let us challenge assumptions, share truths, build enduring alliances, and work together to dismantle caste oppression—wherever it persists.

Let us envision and commit to building a world in which dignity, equality, and justice are not reserved for the few—but guaranteed for all.

Let the movement toward a Caste-Free World begin—with hope, with strength, and with unwavering solidarity!

Thank you for being part of this transformative journey.

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***For further details, please contact:***

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## GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025

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### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, SAHAYATRA- INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025

*Dear Esteemed Fellow Conference Participants of the conference,*

Across the globe, more than 250 million people continue to suffer from systemic discrimination based on race, colour, ethnicity, and caste. What began as a deeply rooted issue in South Asia has now taken a global form, demanding international attention and unified action. Caste discrimination and untouchability are not just local or national concerns—they are global human rights challenges.

We must confront them collectively through strategic dialogue, policy reforms, and actionable implementation at every level. As the organizing body of the Global Conference on a Caste-Free World 2025, to be held in Greater Toronto (Brampton), Canada, from May 25 to 27.

At this conference, we are committed to uniting voices under the powerful theme: "Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Abolition of Caste System." This landmark event aims to foster a global conversation, encouraging the exchange of best practices and collaborative solutions to end caste- and race-based discrimination. We are bringing together diverse communities, experts, institutions, and policy-makers to raise awareness, build solidarity, and influence the creation and enforcement of just laws and inclusive policies. While the conference will address caste-based discrimination at the global scale, special focus will be placed on the situation in Nepal.

The event will culminate in the release of the 'Toronto Declaration', a comprehensive call to action for civil society, educational institutions, governments, and international organizations. The recommendations will serve as a roadmap for future initiatives, with collaboration from local, regional, and global stakeholders—including the United Nations. We call upon all allies, advocates, and change-makers to join us in this historic movement.

Your participation, support, and solidarity are crucial for the success of this conference and for building a caste-free, just world for all

Best Regards

Mr. Santosh Bishwakarma  
President - Sahayata -International Alliance for Social Justice

**MESSAGES OF FELICITATIONS AND REMARKS FROM DIGNITARIES FOR THE  
GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025**

## **MESSAGE RECEIVED ON BEHALF OF GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA**

***Her Excellency Honorable Mary Simon***



*Dear Dr. Rasali and Mr. Bishwakarma,*

*On behalf of Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, I thank you for your letter inviting Her Excellency to speak at the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, scheduled to take place on May 25, 2025.*

*I regret to inform you that it will not be possible for Her Excellency to join you on this occasion.*

*In sending her regrets, the Governor General has asked me to thank you for your kind invitation, and to convey to you her warmest greetings and very best wishes for the success of the conference.*

*Yours sincerely,*

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*Ismat Barkhouse (she/her/elle)  
Assistant Director, Programs | Directrice adjointe, Programmes  
Office of the Secretary to the Governor General | Bureau du secrétaire du gouverneur général, 1, promenade Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A1  
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## **MESSAGE OF WARM GREETINGS FROM NEPAL'S STATE MINISTER OF FOREST AND ENVIRONMENT HONOURABLE RUPA BISHWAKARMA**



*Warm greetings from Nepal !*

*I extend my heartfelt gratitude to SAHAYATRA-International Alliance for Social Justice for organizing the 'Global Conference for a Caste Free World 2025' in Canada. This conference is a significant milestone in the global movement towards equality, social justice, and the abolition of caste-based discrimination and atrocities, especially in countries like Nepal. Dalits and marginalized communities remain among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As the State Minister for the Ministry of Forest and Environment, Government of Nepal, I look forward to seeing rigorous discussions on these intersections during the conference. On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I wish the conference becomes great success and reaffirm my commitment to implementing its outcomes. Together, let us build a just, equitable, and caste-free world.*

*Hon'ble Rupa B.K., State Minister  
Ministry of Forest and Environment  
Government of Nepal*

## **SUMMARY OF SPEECH BY HONOURABLE DEVRAJ BISHWAKARMA, CHAIRPERSON OF NATIONAL DALIT COMMISSION OF NEPAL**



*Hon'ble Devraj Bishokarma  
Chairperson  
National Dalit Commission, Nepal*

Honourable Devraj Bishwakarma, the Chairperson, National Dalit Commission, which is a constitutional body for Dalit Rights in Nepal, in his remarks during the inaugural ceremony of the Global Conference, said, “Around the world, the practice of one human being neglecting, excluding and depriving another of basic human rights due to race, religion, caste, gender and status is showing incivility. The worst forms of human atrocities in South Asia and other territories are among the most prevalent because of caste-based discrimination, and the World Conference in Canada on May 25-27, 2025, is expected to create an environment of international solidarity and partnership against it”.

Chairperson Bishwakarma also highlighted the economic cost of caste discrimination, stating that Nepal loses an estimated 10% of its GDP annually—about NPR 600 billion—due to the exclusion of Dalit communities. He cited Nepal Human Rights Reports and other studies showing the gap between constitutional provisions and actual implementation, noting that although Nepal criminalizes caste-based discrimination, enforcement remains weak, and victims struggle to get justice and compensation even today.



**MESSAGE OF FELICITATION FROM THE AMBASSADOR OF NEPAL TO CANADA  
HIS EXCELLENCY BHARAT RAJ POUDYAL**



Ambassador

Embassy of Nepal  
Ottawa, Canada

Date: 26 April 2025

**Message**

I feel delighted to learn that the **International Alliance for Social Justice – Sahayatra** is organizing Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025. I extend my warm greetings to all participants of the conference. I commend the organizers for taking this worthy initiative to engage in meaningful dialogue toward ending caste-based discrimination and building a more just and inclusive world.

As a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multilingual nation, the Constitution of Nepal firmly guarantees equality and dignity for all citizens, outlawing any form of discrimination based on caste, creed or descent. Yet, we too have for long grappled with the legacies of caste-based discrimination at societal level. While we have made significant strides, we understand that true equality requires more than laws—it demands societal transformation, education, and culture of equality.

I believe this conference provides a crucial platform to share experiences and reaffirm our shared commitment to human dignity. Nepal stands in solidarity with all communities striving to eradicate caste-based discrimination in all its forms and manifestations. Let us work together to nurture societies where every individual can live with dignity, free from prejudice and exclusion.

I wish the conference every success and trust that the outcomes will pave the way for a future grounded in justice, equality, and mutual respect.



Bharat Raj Paudyal  
Ambassador of Nepal to Canada

## **MESSAGE OF FELICITATION FROM CHIEF COMMISSIONER, HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, ONTARIO HONORABLE PATRICIA DEGUIRE**

Ontario  
Human Rights  
Commission

Office of the Chief Commissioner

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 900  
Toronto ON M7A 2G5

Tel.: (416) 314-4537  
Fax: (416) 314-7752

Commission  
Ontarienne des  
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Bureau du Commissaire en Chef

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Téléc. : (416) 314-7752



February 19, 2025

Santosh Bishwakarma | President, Sahayatra- International Alliance for Social Justice

Email: [info@sahayatraintl.com](mailto:info@sahayatraintl.com)

### **Subject: Invitation to Inaugurate the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025**

Dear Santosh Bishwakarma:

I hope this letter finds you in good health and excited about your inaugural conference.

With deep regret that I write to inform you that I am unavailable to attend the inauguration of the 2025 Global Conference for a Caste-Free World organised by Sahayatra- International Alliance for Social Justice. I sincerely appreciate the invitation and recognise the significant importance of this gathering in advancing social justice, equality, and human rights globally.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination, including caste-based inequalities, and I regret that prior commitments prevent the OHRC from being present at this historic event.

The OHRC is confident that the conference will be a great success in advancing the cause of social justice. Wishing you and all the planners an edifying and enjoyable conference.

Warm regards,

**Patricia DeGuire**  
Chief Commissioner  
Ontario Human Rights Commission

**GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025 (MAY 25-27)**

**SPEECHES FROM TWO DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES FROM INDIA**

- **Sh. K. P. Chaudhary, Secretary General of All India Federation of SC/ST Organization**
- **Sh. Rajratna Ashok Ambedkar, National President, Buddhist Society of India.**



# All India Federation of SC/ST Organizations (Regd.)

New Delhi India

**Address of Sh. K.P. Chaudhary All India Secretary General  
delivered in International Conference on Caste Free World  
2025 held from 25 to 27 May 2025 at Canadian  
Convention Centrre Brampton Canada.**



**Er. Rajinder Parsad**  
Chairman



**K.P. Chaudhary**  
Secretary General

## Office Address

**F-19 United India Life Building Middle  
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Ph. No. 011-43613183, 23716640, Mob. 9810536408 E-mail : walickpc@gmail.com

All India Federation of Scheduled Caste/Tribe Organisations (Regd.)

## ALL INDIA FEDERATION OF SC/ST ORGANISATIONS (Regd.)

Regd. Add.: 741, Housing Board Colony Saraswati Vihar Chakarpur Gurugram Ph. 011-43613183, 237166  
Mob. 09810536408 E-mail: federationscstorg@gmail.com, Website: www.federationscstorg.com

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### Address by Shri K.P. Chaudhary, National General

Secretary (Federation) at the Caste Free World Conference 2025 to be held  
in Brampton, Canada from 25 to 27 May 2025



Jai Bhim Namo Buddhaya, Baba Saheb Ambedkar is immortal, may Lord Buddha have mercy and compassion

Jai Bhim Namo Buddhaya to all the enlightened brothers and sisters of the society from all corners of the world present in the Caste Free World Conference 2025 organized today at the Canadian Convention Centre in this historic land of Brampton, Canada under the aegis of Sahayatra International Alliance for Social Justice.

I express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to the officials of Sahayatra International Alliance for Social Justice for the privilege I have received to participate in this important Caste Free World Conference 2025 today.

I am K.P. Choudhary, I have come from a country which is full of casteism, whose warehouses are full of casteism, whose air is full of casteism, whose institutions are full of casteism, I have come amongst you today to get rid of this casteism and to improve the future of the exploited people of India.

Is there caste or not? Why should caste be abolished and how should it be abolished? The question is why should a Hindu give up caste?

A Hindu cannot leave caste because he gets direct benefits from caste. In his life, caste is like a gift which benefits him throughout his life. In such a situation, expecting a casteist Hindu to cooperate with Dalits in eradicating caste is a very foolish expectation. Yes! He will keep participating in big seminars against casteism with the caste placard around his neck but will never leave caste till his death.

Religion is a matter of faith but in India it is used as a business and casteism is its dividend and no one leaves the dividends of the business. Now the question is how to get rid of caste? Dalits have taken several measures to get rid of the caste system. The most important among them is religious conversion but it is also true that in India one can change religion but cannot change caste. The reason is caste is at the core of India. Many religions have flourished here with different thinking or have come from outside. The newest religions are Sikhism, Islam, Christianity but none could keep themselves free from casteism.

Social corruption is more dangerous than economic corruption. Economic corruption affects a person's pocket while social corruption affects a person's mind and brain.

India is the world's largest laboratory of caste system in which caste discrimination has been established in a planned manner. India is a Hindu majority country and caste system is a bitter truth of Hindu religion, therefore India is the only exporter of casteism. If caste has reached anywhere in the world, then you can see India as its producer. It is impossible to make the world caste free without making India caste free, it is unimaginable.

Any person from the Hindu upper caste society of India, wherever he went in the world, took casteism with him in bags and made every possible effort to spread casteism at the international level with all his might. To solve this huge problem, the need to make laws was felt in many countries of the world like Great Britain and Seattle State of America etc.

In a democratic country like India, economic and social inequality is at its peak and there is extreme casteism in all the three pillars of the legislature, executive and judiciary.

Due to the tireless efforts of Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, 25 percent reservation is implemented in the legislature of India and on the basis of this reservation, 131 MPs are elected from the reserved quota every five years in the Parliament of India, who have the responsibility of representing the people of the Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribe community, but all these MPs who are members of the great law-making institution Lok Sabha, have no work other than going to the Parliament with the votes of the people of their community. Instead of raising the voice of the sorrows and problems of the people of their community, these people follow the orders of their political party and instead of raising the problems of the people of the society or solving them, they keep a distance from the society.

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Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was well aware of this problem, that is why he had demanded separate elections for the Dalits of India in the Round Table Conference organized in the British Parliament, but unfortunately, through the Poona Pact, the people who believed in the caste system snatched this right from the Dalits.

Even after 76 years of independence, despite some representation of Dalits in the executive, the behaviour of the executive is extremely casteist. The executive is completely occupied by casteist people.

The provision of 22.5 percent reservation for the people of Scheduled Caste / Tribe community in the government sector in India by Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar has now become completely meaningless because the government sector in India is almost coming to an end and government jobs have almost been abolished by privatizing the government departments. No provision of reservation in the private sector has been made for the people of Scheduled Caste / Tribe community by amending the Constitution. The participation of the people of Scheduled Caste / Tribe (Dalit community) in the employment generated in India is negligible.

The representation of SC/ST people in the judiciary is next to zero. So, people from SC/ST communities languish in jail for years even for petty crimes and there is no hearing for them. The jails in India are still filled with SC/ST people throughout the country.

Under the Scheduled Castes/Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, cases are filed against people of the general caste who commit atrocities on the people of the Scheduled Castes/Tribes community. Due to this caste based corruption prevalent in the judiciary, most of these people go scot free.

A living example of caste discrimination can be seen in the fact that Chief Justice of India's Supreme Court Justice B.R. Gavai was not provided protocol during his recent visit to his home state Maharashtra. The Chief Justice also admitted that this issue is not limited to protocol but it is caste discrimination and feudalism.

Along with this, another living example of caste discrimination can be seen in the Madhya Pradesh High Court Gwalior Bench in the form of not allowing the installation of the statue of the most revered Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. Despite the order of the Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court Justice Suresh Kait Saheb, who comes from the Dalit community, the statue of Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar could not be installed in the Madhya Pradesh High Court Gwalior Bench premises and the statue was returned.

President of India Smt. Draupadi Murmu ji comes from Scheduled Tribe Dalit community, Law Minister of India Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal comes from Scheduled Caste Dalit community, Parliamentary Affairs Minister of India Shri Kiren Rijiju is a Buddhist who comes from Scheduled Tribe Dalit community, Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India Justice B.R. Gavai comes from Scheduled Caste Dalit community.

Despite this, not allowing the statue of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, to be installed in the temple of justice, i.e. the Gwalior Bench premises of the State High Court, is the height of caste hatred.

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In India, atrocities and injustice against the people of the Scheduled Castes/Tribes community are at their peak. The Central Government and the State Governments, irrespective of the political party they belong to, are completely indifferent and negative in matters of welfare of the Scheduled Castes/Tribes community. The governments have no agenda for the welfare of the people of the Scheduled Castes/Tribes community. Even if a case is registered under the Scheduled Castes/Tribes Atrocities Prevention Act, when the culprit does not get punishment, his courage increases so much that he openly commits atrocities and injustice and the system of the country supports him.

Social media data shows that during the reign of the present governments in India, there has been a flood of atrocities like assault, rape, murder on the basis of caste against the people of Scheduled Caste/Tribes community.

SC Subplan and Tribe Subplan were specially made keeping in mind the development of the Scheduled Caste/Tribes community and provision was made in the constitution that when the Finance Minister of the country presents the budget of India, it will be mandatory to allocate budget in proportion to the population of the people of the Scheduled Caste/Tribes community for their welfare, but the caste system of this country is so strong that not even a single penny of this budget is spent on the welfare of the Scheduled Caste/Tribes community and it is misused by the government for other purposes.

In short, India's caste system is very strong and it has been designed in such a systematic way that it became difficult even for the world's most capable person, the most revered Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, to break it and he had to say that being born in a Hindu religion was not in my hands but I will not die as a Hindu and on 14 October 1956, he, along with 5 lakh followers, renounced Hinduism by accepting Buddhism at Deekshabhoomi Nagpur.

Here it is important to mention the words of Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar that religion is like a shirt for a man which he can change whenever he wants but caste is like his skin which he gets by birth and remains attached to his body throughout his life and burns with his body only at the time of death.

Today, I would like to request all the representatives present in this International Caste Free Conference organized at the world level that as long as the caste system of India is alive, imagining a caste free world at the global level would be a fantasy. Let all of us representatives from every corner of the world come together and find a permanent solution to this problem today and take a pledge to make the entire world caste free.

Babasaheb suggested a path of religious conversion which leads us to Buddhism but we were negligent in adopting it and the people of Scheduled Caste/Tribe society, who are constantly facing injustice and atrocities, did not accept Buddhism. In such a situation, the sting of casteism in India has become a serious and complex problem and has established itself as a demon which can be ended only by adopting Buddhism suggested by the most revered Babasaheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar.

The Constitution of India does not allow any citizen of India to practice untouchability or discrimination on the basis of caste, rather it paves the way for taking legal action against those who do so and send them to jail. Then why is the Constitution of India violated? Why atrocities on the basis of caste? Why discrimination on the basis of caste? Why injustice on the basis of caste? Why inhumane behaviour on the basis of caste?

The Indian constitution clearly prohibits any kind of caste or gender discrimination. The constitution is our protector and guide for the full implementation of the constitution.

Let's take two steps towards the abolition of casteism! Towards the implementation of constitutional provisions made in favour of the Scheduled Caste/Tribe community in India!

Towards the third freedom!

The first war of independence in India was fought against the British in 1857 in the name of Quit India!

The second freedom struggle was in 1947 in which India became independent only politically.

But even today a large Scheduled Caste/Tribe population of India is socially enslaved and victim of caste discrimination!

Then why shouldn't we want freedom?

Third freedom- social freedom!

Third freedom- economic freedom!

Third freedom- cultural freedom!

Towards social revolution, towards ideological revolution, towards blue revolution, Jai Bhim! Jai Bharat!

K.P. Chowdhary

National Principal Secretary

Federation

**TOWARDS A GLOBAL  
CASTELESS SOCIETY:  
AMBEDKARITE VISION AND THE  
URGENT NEED FOR CASTE AS A  
RECOGNISED CATEGORY OF  
DISCRIMINATION IN CANADA**

**RAJRATNA ASHOK AMBEDKAR**

NATIONAL PRESIDENT: THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF INDIA

FOUNDER CHAIRMAN: DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR MULTI STATE CO-OPERATIVE CREDIT SOCIETY LIMITED.

*ambedkarraj@gmail.com*

PRESENTED AT THE GLOBAL  
CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE-FREE  
WORLD 2025

**BRAMPTON, TORONTO**  
**MAY 25, 26 & 27 2025**





## Rajratna Ambedkar: Champion of Equality and Heir to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Legacy

**Rajratna Ambedkar** stands as a towering figure in the global movement for a caste-free world, embodying the vision and resolve of his great-granduncle, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar—the architect of India's Constitution and a global icon in the fight against caste oppression. As the National President of the Buddhist Society of India, an organization founded by Dr. Ambedkar in 1955 to promote equality and social justice through Buddhist principles, Rajratna Ambedkar carries forward a legacy that transcends borders, inspiring millions to challenge systemic discrimination and embrace a casteless future.

Born into the lineage of Dr. Ambedkar, Rajratna's life is deeply intertwined with the struggle for dignity and equality. As the great-grandnephew of the revered leader, he inherited not only a familial connection but also a profound commitment to annihilating caste—a system Dr. Ambedkar described as a “division of laborers” that dehumanizes individuals based on birth.

Under Rajratna's leadership, the Buddhist Society of India has become a vibrant platform for advancing Dr. Ambedkar's egalitarian ideals, fostering community networks that reject caste hierarchies and promote compassion, mindfulness, and social reform. His work amplifies Dr. Ambedkar's historic 1956 conversion to Buddhism, which inspired millions to seek liberation from caste oppression through a philosophy grounded in equality.

Rajratna Ambedkar's contributions extend beyond India, resonating with global anti-caste movements. He is a vocal advocate for recognizing caste as a distinct factor of discrimination within international human rights frameworks, aligning with efforts in places like Seattle, where caste-based discrimination was banned in 2023, and California, where anti-caste legislation has gained momentum. His leadership bridges local and global struggles, drawing on Dr. Ambedkar's engagements with thinkers like W.E.B. Du Bois and his influence on movements ranging from Japan's Burakumin communities to the Dalit diaspora in the UK and the US.

Rajratna emphasizes that recognizing caste as a global issue does not entrench caste identities but rather dismantles the structures that sustain them, thereby paving the way for a truly casteless society.

**At the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025**, Rajratna Ambedkar contributes a powerful perspective to the theme Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Abolition of the Caste System. His work critiques systemic issues, including the potential manipulation of India's caste-based census and restrictive anti-conversion laws that hinder Dalit agency—issues echoing Dr. Ambedkar's calls for transparency and freedom of choice. Through initiatives such as educational outreach, inter-caste dialogue, and digital activism, Rajratna continues to operationalize Dr. Ambedkar's mantra of "educate, agitate, organize," inspiring a new generation to pursue justice.

As a keynote speaker, Rajratna Ambedkar offers insights from his lifelong dedication to social transformation, presenting a vision for global solidarity that honors Dr. Ambedkar's legacy while addressing contemporary challenges. His presence at the conference underscores the urgency of collective action to eradicate caste discrimination and build a world in which dignity is universal.

**Jai Bhim!**

## **Igniting a Casteless Future: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Legacy in Building Global Solidarity for Equality and Justice**

Esteemed delegates, organizers, scholars, activists, and global champions of justice,

**It is with profound humility and unwavering resolve that I address you today as the National President of the Buddhist Society of India, an organization founded by my great-granduncle, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar—the architect of India's Constitution, a revolutionary scholar, and the indomitable voice against caste oppression. As we gather for the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, under the theme *Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and Abolition of Caste System*, I stand inspired by Dr. Ambedkar's clarion call to annihilate caste and his vision that transcends borders, igniting a global movement for equality and human dignity.**

His influence, rooted in his relentless fight against caste, resonates worldwide, offering a blueprint for dismantling systemic oppression and fostering solidarity across cultures and continents.

### **Understanding Caste Discrimination: Dr. Ambedkar's Global Lens**

Dr. Ambedkar defined caste as not merely a division of labor but a “division of laborers,” a hierarchical system that dehumanizes millions based on birth. In his seminal work, *Annihilation of Caste* (1936), he described caste as a “state of mind,” a notional barrier that entrenches social, economic, and cultural inequities. His analysis was not confined to India; he saw caste as a universal archetype of exclusion, comparable to systems of racial and class oppression globally. His scholarship drew parallels with slavery in America and apartheid in South Africa, positioning caste as a global human rights issue.

Born into a Dalit Mahar family in 1891, Dr. Ambedkar faced the brutal realities of caste discrimination firsthand—segregated in school, denied access to public water sources, and ostracized despite his academic brilliance. Yet, he transformed personal adversity into a global mission. Educated at Columbia University and the London School of Economics, he engaged with thinkers like John Dewey, whose pragmatism shaped his approach to social reform. His global perspective was evident in his 1916 paper, *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*, where he analyzed caste as a system of endogamy, a framework that resonates with global discussions on systemic discrimination.

Caste's impacts are staggering. In India, over 200 million Dalits face systemic exclusion. The National Crime Records Bureau reported 45,935 cases of crimes against Scheduled Castes in 2019, including 4,000 cases of physical violence. Economically, Dalits are disproportionately represented in low-paying, manual labor jobs, with self-employed Scheduled Caste workers earning 20-30% less than their non-SC/ST counterparts.

Health inequities are rampant: a 2020 study in *The Lancet* highlighted that Dalits face higher rates of malnutrition and limited access to healthcare due to social stigma. Culturally, caste dictates social interactions, from marriage to dining, perpetuating exclusion even in urban settings.

Dr. Ambedkar's global influence lies in his ability to universalize the caste struggle. His 1956 conversion to Buddhism, alongside 500,000 followers, was not just a rejection of Hinduism's caste hierarchy but a global statement of embracing an egalitarian philosophy. Buddhist principles of compassion and equality inspired movements in Japan, where Burakumin communities, facing similar descent-based discrimination, adopted Ambedkarite ideas.

In the UK, Dalit diaspora organizations like the Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance draw on his teachings to combat caste prejudice. His influence extends to the US, where scholars like Cornel West have cited Ambedkar's work in discussions on systemic injustice, underscoring his relevance to global anti-oppression movements.

#### **Global Recognition of Caste as a Factor of Discrimination**

The fight to recognize caste as a distinct factor of discrimination in international human rights frameworks is a direct extension of Dr. Ambedkar's legacy. In 2001, Dalit activists at the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban pushed for caste to be classified as descent-based discrimination. Despite India's government dismissing caste as an "internal matter," the NGO forum's declaration acknowledged it, marking a milestone. Dr. Ambedkar's earlier advocacy for internationalizing caste issues, evident in his correspondence with W.E.B. Du Bois, laid the groundwork for this global dialogue.

Recent developments amplify this cause. In 2023, Seattle became the first US city to ban caste-based discrimination, followed by California's 2023 legislation. Institutions like California State University and Brandeis University have adopted anti-caste policies, reflecting Ambedkar's influence in framing caste as a global human rights violation.

The 2020 Cisco lawsuit, where a Dalit employee alleged caste-based harassment, highlighted how caste travels with the Indian diaspora, affecting workplaces and communities in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia.

Recognizing caste as a factor of discrimination does not perpetuate caste identities but exposes their systemic harm, enabling targeted legal protections. Dr. Ambedkar distinguished caste from race, noting in *Annihilation of Caste* that “the caste system does not demarcate racial division” but operates as a social hierarchy within a race. Yet, he supported global advocacy, as seen in his engagement with the 1942 All-India Depressed Classes Conference, where he called for international solidarity against oppression. This recognition aligns with his vision of a casteless society by dismantling the structures that sustain caste, from legal impunity to social prejudice. As his heirs, we must champion this cause, ensuring caste is addressed in global frameworks like the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, which emphasize equality and inclusion.

### **The Caste-Based Census: A Manipulated Promise?**

Dr. Ambedkar supported caste enumeration to ensure equitable representation and inform affirmative action, as seen in his advocacy during the 1951 census debates. The recent announcement of a caste-based census in India, the first since 1931, ostensibly aims to fulfill this vision. However, its execution under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government raises serious concerns. The BJP, historically resistant to caste enumeration to maintain a unified Hindu identity, shifted its stance post-2024 elections, likely to counter losses in states like Bihar, where a 2023 state-level caste survey revealed that Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) constitute 63.1% of the population.

This census risks being an eyewash. The 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census, conducted under the Congress government, was marred by incomplete data release and methodological flaws, with estimates of OBC populations varying widely. Allegations persist that the BJP may manipulate the upcoming census to underreport marginalized caste populations, limiting their access to reservations in education and jobs. Such manipulation undermines Dr. Ambedkar’s vision of data-driven justice, as seen in his insistence on accurate representation in the Poona Pact (1932), which secured reserved seats for Depressed Classes.

Transparency is non-negotiable. Without independent oversight, public access to raw data, and clear methodology, the census could serve as a political tool to appease caste-based vote banks rather than empower marginalized communities. As Ambedkarites, we must demand accountability, ensuring that caste data serves as a tool for justice, not a weapon of control.

#### **Anti-Conversion Laws: A Barrier to Ambedkar's Vision**

India's anti-conversion laws, enacted in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat, pose a direct challenge to Dr. Ambedkar's legacy of social transformation. These laws, framed as protections against forced conversions, often target Dalits and Adivasis who seek to escape caste oppression through religious conversion. Dr. Ambedkar's 1956 conversion to Buddhism, alongside millions, was a radical rejection of Hinduism's caste hierarchy. He saw Buddhism as a path to equality, declaring, "I was born a Hindu, but I will not die a Hindu." His **Buddha and His Dhamma** (1957) articulates a vision of religion as a liberatory force, free from caste's chains.

Anti-conversion laws undermine this legacy. In Uttar Pradesh, the 2020 Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance imposes up to seven years' imprisonment for conversions deemed "fraudulent" or "coerced," with vague definitions that disproportionately affect Dalits converting to Buddhism or Christianity. These laws violate Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which Dr. Ambedkar helped draft, guaranteeing freedom of religion. They reinforce caste by restricting the agency of marginalized communities to choose their spiritual path, effectively criminalizing Ambedkar's own act of conversion.

**Globally, these laws have drawn criticism. A 2022 UN report highlighted their impact on religious minorities and Dalits, urging India to align with international human rights standards. As the Buddhist Society of India, we must oppose these laws, advocating for the right to religious choice as a cornerstone of dismantling caste oppression. Dr. Ambedkar's global influence, evident in Buddhist revival movements in Sri Lanka and Thailand, underscores the universal appeal of his vision, which these laws threaten to stifle.**

### **Dr. Ambedkar's Global Influence: A Beacon for Solidarity**

Dr. Ambedkar's influence transcends India, inspiring global movements for equality. His engagement with the Harlem Renaissance and correspondence with Du Bois positioned him as a global thinker, linking caste with race and class struggles. In the UK, the Ambedkar International Mission organizes annual conferences to combat caste discrimination, drawing on his **Who Were the Shudras?** (1946) to challenge caste's historical roots. In the US, the Ambedkar Association of North America supports Dalit diaspora communities.

His Buddhist conversion sparked a global Dalit Buddhist movement, influencing communities in Japan, Taiwan, and Hungary. The Nagaloka Centre in India trains international Buddhist activists, spreading Ambedkar's egalitarian philosophy. His emphasis on education as emancipation resonates in initiatives like the Ambedkar Scholarship Fund in the US, supporting marginalized students. His legal contributions, particularly the Indian Constitution's abolition of untouchability (Article 17) and affirmative action provisions, have inspired anti-discrimination laws worldwide, from South Africa's post-apartheid constitution to Nepal's caste-based affirmative action policies.

### **Building Solidarity for a Casteless Future**

Dr. Ambedkar's vision for a casteless society was not limited to legal reforms but demanded a social revolution. He advocated inter-caste marriages, interdining, and economic empowerment to break caste barriers. His founding of the Buddhist Society of India in 1955 was a step toward institutionalizing these values, promoting Buddhism as a casteless alternative to hierarchical religions. His strategies—education, agitation, and organization—remain our roadmap.

Globally, we can draw inspiration from movements like Black Lives Matter, which, like Ambedkarite struggles, confront systemic oppression through grassroots solidarity. Practical steps include:

- **Advocacy** : Push for caste to be recognized in international human rights frameworks, building on Seattle and California's precedents.
- **Education**: Promote Ambedkarite curricula in schools, highlighting his global influence.
- **Economic Empowerment**: Support inter-caste marriage schemes and scholarships for Dalit students, as seen in Maharashtra's Dr. Ambedkar Foundation initiatives.
- **Digital Activism**: Amplify anti-caste voices on platforms like X, where Dalit activists challenge casteist narratives.

The Buddhist Society of India continues this legacy, fostering community networks that reject caste consciousness. We must collaborate with global anti-oppression movements, from Indigenous rights to gender equality, to build a united front against systemic injustice.

### **Introduction to Economic Empowerment**

Economic empowerment for individuals from marginalized caste backgrounds, such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), is crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty and discrimination in India. These communities often face limited access to credit, land, education, and employment due to systemic caste-based exclusion. Cooperative credit societies offer a promising solution by providing affordable financial services, fostering collective action, and promoting entrepreneurship, aligning with the goal of enhancing livelihoods and economic opportunities.

### **The Role of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Vision**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a key figure in social justice, emphasized economic empowerment as integral to dismantling caste oppression. His strategies included education, political advocacy, constitutional provisions like reservations (22.5% for SCs/STs), and economic initiatives such as land rights movements. His 1956 conversion to Buddhism symbolized a rejection of caste, promoting equality and self-reliance, which continues to inspire initiatives like the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Multi-State Cooperative Credit Society.

### **Current Initiative: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Multi-State Cooperative Credit Society**

Recently established, this society aims to provide financial inclusion for marginalized castes through low-interest loans, savings schemes, and financial literacy programs. With plans to expand branches across India and become a cooperative bank within five years, it addresses the exclusion from mainstream financial systems, offering a pathway to economic self-reliance and dignity.

## **Detailed Analysis of Economic Empowerment Strategies for Marginalized Caste Backgrounds**

### **Introduction and Context**

In India, the caste system has historically marginalized communities such as Dalits (SCs), Adivasis (STs), and OBCs, limiting their access to economic opportunities. A 2018 study by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies found that self-employed SC workers earn 20-30% less than non-SC/ST counterparts, with 70% engaged in informal, low-paying jobs like manual scavenging and agricultural labor. **Economic empowerment, defined as providing tools and resources for financial independence, is essential for social justice.** Cooperative credit societies, rooted in collective action and mutual aid, offer a viable strategy to address these disparities, particularly through initiatives like the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Multi-State Cooperative Credit Society, recently launched with plans to expand nationwide and become a cooperative bank within five years.

### **Historical and Ideological Foundations**

**Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision for economic empowerment was central to his fight against caste oppression. His strategies, as detailed in [Dr. B.R. Ambedkar And The Upliftment Of Marginalized Communities In India](<https://pwonlyias.com/upsc-notes/dr-ambedkar-marginalized-communities/>), included:**

- Establishing the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha in 1924 to promote education and self-respect.
- Advocating for civic rights through Satyagrahas like the Mahad Tank Satyagraha (1927).
- Ensuring constitutional provisions such as Article 17 (abolition of untouchability) and reservations (22.5% for SCs/STs).
- Promoting land and labor rights through movements like the Dalit Land Rights Movement (1980s–1990s) and Safai Karamchari Andolan (1990s–2000s).

His 1956 conversion to Buddhism, involving 500,000 followers, symbolized a rejection of caste hierarchies, aligning with cooperative principles of equality and mutual support. This legacy informs Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Multi-State Cooperative Credit Society Ltd, aiming to provide financial inclusion and economic opportunities.

#### **The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Multi-State Cooperative Credit Society: Current Status and Future Plans**

Launched recently, the society offers low-interest loans, savings schemes, and financial literacy programs tailored to SC, ST, and OBC communities. It addresses the systemic exclusion highlighted by a 2020 Centre for Equity Studies report, which noted Dalits are often denied loans due to caste bias. With branches expanding across India, the society targets becoming a cooperative bank within five years, regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), to offer comprehensive banking services like microfinance and business loans. Early impacts include disbursing loans to over 1,000 Dalit entrepreneurs, enabling small businesses in retail, agriculture, and handicrafts, and empowering SC women through financial literacy workshops.

#### **Conclusion**

*Dr. Ambedkar's words in "Annihilation of Caste" ring true today: "Caste is a notion; it is a state of mind." His global influence—from inspiring Dalit diaspora movements to shaping international human rights discourse—offers hope for a casteless future. Recognizing caste as a factor of discrimination is not an endorsement of caste but a step toward its annihilation, exposing its harms to enable justice. We must reject manipulated censuses and oppressive anti-conversion laws, holding fast to Ambedkar's vision of liberty, equality, and fraternity.*

As we stand at this global crossroads, let us ignite a casteless future, drawing on Dr. Ambedkar's legacy to build solidarity across borders. Let us educate, agitate, and organize, ensuring that dignity is not determined by birth but by our shared humanity. Together, we can fulfill his dream of a world where justice prevails.

**\*\*Jai Bhim! Namo Buddhay ! Thank you.\*\***

**A LETTER OF SOLIDARITY FROM SAHAYATRA- INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE  
TO EUROPEAN ROMA GRASSROOTS ORGANISATION (ERGO) NETWORK**



**GLOBAL  
CONFERENCE FOR  
A CASTE FREE WORLD  
2025**

Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Abolition of Caste System



**12 June 2025**

**Gabriela Hrabaňová, Director  
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email: [g.hrabanova@ergonetwork.org](mailto:g.hrabanova@ergonetwork.org)  
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**Dear esteemed colleague,**

We, at the Sahayatra- International Alliance for a Caste Free World 2025, the organizers of the **Global Conference for a Caste Free World 2025 (May 25-27), Toronto**, have stood in firm solidarity with the **Roma General Assembly 2025 (28-30 May)**, held in Prague, recognizing that the event organized by the ERGO Network is playing in the ongoing struggle against antigypsyism and caste-analogous oppressions. On the auspices of ERGO Network—Europe's leading Roma grassroots coalition of over 30 Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations, headquartered in Brussels, the [ERGO Network General Assembly 2025 – ERGO Network](#)—have united Roma voices and allies in a shared mission: to challenge systemic inequality, combat discrimination, and ensure that Roma communities shape the policies that affect their lives.

These events embody a forward-thinking, intersectional vision by forging connections between Roma rights and the global movement against caste discrimination—reinforcing that all forms of descent-based exclusion share root causes and must be addressed collectively. Our endorsement celebrates this bold solidarity: a commitment to uplift Roma leadership, amplify anti-caste justice across borders, and foster inclusive, participatory dialogue and mutual collaboration that advances human dignity and equality for all.

We are making efforts to follow up on the [TORONTO DECLARATION](#) that was shared with you earlier, from the Global Conference, as the final outcome of the Global Conference for a Caste Free World 2025., which encompasses our shared goals and call to action towards achieving them. As a note of confirmation, we would like to share with you that we have made an appeal, through the G7 Presidency Prime Minister of Canada, to G7 leaders gathering at the G7 Summit in Canada this coming weekend for their attention to the call to action as per the Toronto Declaration.

We look forward to working collaboratively with your network for a shared goal.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali  
Chair, Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025  
Toronto, Canada.

Santosh Bishwakarma  
President, Sahayatra- International Alliance for Social Justice  
Toronto, Canada.

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## SAHAYATRA- International Alliance for Social Justice

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 [info@sahayatraintl.com](mailto:info@sahayatraintl.com)

**SELECTED MEDIA OPINION PIECES, INTERVIEWS, NEWS COVERAGE**

## **Media News coverage:**

- <https://nepalnews.com/s/society/global-conference-for-a-caste-free-world-2025-taking-place-in-toronto/>
- <https://www.nepalilink.com/2025/05/20/101740.html>
- <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2025/05/1684647/global-conference-to-be-held-in-canada-for-a-world-free-of-racial-discrimination>
- <https://nepalnewsbank.com/newsdetail/33530>
- <https://kendrabindu.com/news/423317/>
- <https://www.arthadabali.com/2025/05/20/73458>
- <https://instakhabar.com/news/40130/>
- [६० औं अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय जातीय भेदभाव उन्मूलन दिवसको अवसरमा सहयात्रा क्यानडाले आयोजना ग-यो वेबिनार](#)
- [Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 being organized in Toronto, Call for registration | enepalese | https://www.enepalese.com/2025/02/449333.html](#)
- ['जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन' टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै। enepalese https://www.enepalese.com/2025/02/449328.html](#)
- [जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन २०२५ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै हुँदै https://hollywoodkhabar.com/archives/1516](#)
- ['जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन' टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै](#)
- [जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन २०२५ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुने https://nepali.gnbnow.com/archives/10130](#)
- ['जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्व' सम्बन्धी विश्व सम्मेलन किन https://www.ratopati.com/story/474444/why-a-world-conference-on-39a-world-free-of-racial-discrimination39](#)

- [जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन २०२५ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुने - जिएनबी-नेपाली विश्व समाचार](#)
- [‘जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन’ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै | enepalese](#)
- [जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन २०२५ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै – Lagani News](#)
- [जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन २०२५ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै - Rojgar Manch](#)
- <https://rojgarmanch.com/abroad/2025/02/85622/>
- [Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 being organised in Toronto - The DMN News | Breaking News, Live Updates, Analysis from Nepal The DMN News | Breaking News, Live Updates, Analysis from Nepal](#)
- [क्यानडाको टोरन्टोमा जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन हुने :ANZ Khabar](#)
- [जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै - europati](#)
- [‘जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन’ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै – Nepalilink](#)
- [टोरन्टोमा जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन’ हुँदै](#)
- [‘जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन’ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै | Nepalswiss](#)
- [Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 being organized in Toronto, Call for registration | Nepaldalitinfo International](#)
- [जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन २०२५ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै – Hollywoodkhabar](#)
- [‘जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्वका लागि विश्व सम्मेलन’ टोरन्टोमा आयोजना हुँदै – Nepalilink](#)
- <https://dalitonline.com/2025/02/22/22319/>
- [https://samatapost.com/article/933?fbclid=IwY2xjawlvLsBleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHaRh834KkWJ8fq76y1fPv3RjueBvDxYO Bj1OWkMjS-yJkg9uNNn2COfHRg\\_aem\\_TGgLI1a7ElfXM17dHhoDSA](https://samatapost.com/article/933?fbclid=IwY2xjawlvLsBleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHaRh834KkWJ8fq76y1fPv3RjueBvDxYO Bj1OWkMjS-yJkg9uNNn2COfHRg_aem_TGgLI1a7ElfXM17dHhoDSA)

## **Interviews and Articles:**

- ['विश्व सम्मेलनमा जातीय विभेदका कारण पीडित करोडौं जनताको अवस्थाबारे छलफल गरिनेछ' - सन्तोष विश्वकर्मा | enepalese](#)
- [Interview: 'Traditional caste system is a man-made social construct that has pushed the Dalits to continued state of oppression'-Dr Drona Prakash Rasali \(<https://www.southasiatime.com/2025/02/15/traditional-caste-system-is-a-man-made-social-construct-that-has-pushed-the-dalits-to-continued-state-of-oppression-dr-drona-prakash-rasali/>\)](#)
- ['जातीय विभेद मुक्त विश्व' सम्बन्धी विश्व सम्मेलन किन ? | Nepal's first 24-hour updated news portal - Ratopati](#)



Dignity Post, New York & Kathmandu, 30-11-2024 10:40

## Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 Announced



Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Abolition of Caste System

25-27 May 2025 | Toronto, Canada



**November 29, Toronto, Canada – The International Alliance for Social Justice – Sahayatra Canada** has announced the **Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025**, which will take place in Toronto, Canada, from **May 25 to 27, 2025**. The announcement was made during a virtual press conference, emphasizing the event's theme, "**Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Abolition of the Caste System.**"

Highlighting the urgent need to address caste-based discrimination and untouchability, **Dr. Dron Rasali**, President of Sahayatra Canada and a senior Canadian government official, stated that **over 260 million people globally** face inhumane treatment due to caste, race, and descent. This global conference, the first of its kind, aims to foster international dialogue and collaboration to eradicate these forms of discrimination.

### Purpose and Focus

Dr. Rasali outlined the conference's goal: to create a shared platform for **government agencies, policymakers, human rights activists, civil society representatives, professionals, researchers, and students** to exchange knowledge and strategies to combat caste-based oppression. He emphasized that this event will address caste discrimination as an interconnected global issue, fostering solidarity to create fair and equitable societies.

“The conference will draw attention to the necessity of national and international policies to eliminate discrimination and untouchability,” he said. “It will also explore best practices and collaborative solutions to dismantle the caste system and other oppressive structures.”

### **Wide Representation Expected**

The event will host approximately **500 participants**, including Dalit rights activists, government officials, policymakers, academics, researchers, journalists, business leaders, and victims of caste discrimination and their families. Discussions will highlight personal experiences, the impacts of caste discrimination, and strategies for systemic change.

At the press conference, **Santosh Bishwakarma**, President of Sahayatra Canada, shared updates on the event preparations. He noted ongoing coordination with national and international organizations to ensure smooth management for attendees, including subject experts and scholars.

### **Call for Solidarity**

The organizing committee urged stakeholders, including human rights activists and journalists, to amplify the message and increase the conference's impact. Participants suggested that the event should aim to advance the global movement against casteism, racism, and all forms of discriminatory behavior.

### **How to Participate**

Those interested in joining the conference can register at the **Sahayatra Canada website**: <https://www.sahayatrainl.com/>. Registered participants will receive official invitations; however, they are responsible for arranging their visas and travel.

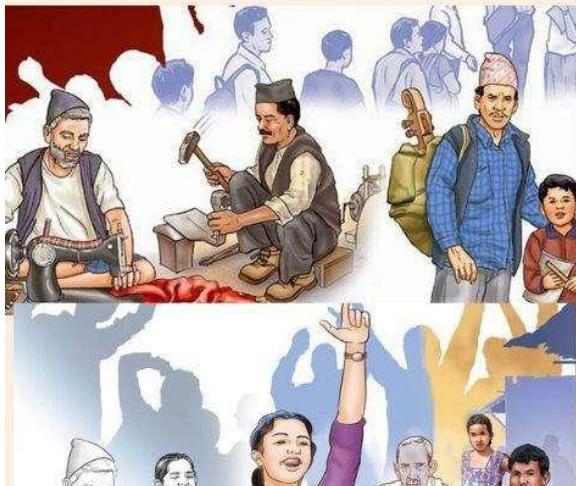
The **Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025** promises to be a pivotal moment in the global struggle for equality and justice. It aims to unite voices to end caste-based discrimination once and for all.



[Dignity Post](#), New York & Kathmandu, 20-02-2025 04:27

## **Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali: Championing a Caste-Free World Through Advocacy and Action**

Currently serving as the chairperson of Sahayatra International Alliance for Social Justice, Dr. Rasali recently spoke with **SOUTH ASIA TIME** regarding the upcoming Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, scheduled for May 25-27 in Toronto under the auspices of Sahayatra.



Dr. Rasali has been a staunch advocate for health equity, community empowerment, and social justice.

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, a distinguished Nepalese-Canadian population and public health expert, currently serves as an adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia in Canada. Throughout his illustrious 45-year career spanning veterinary science, genetics, epidemiology, public health, and higher education, Dr. Rasali has been a staunch advocate for health equity, community empowerment, and social justice.

He co-founded the Emotional Well-Being Institute of Canada in 2021 and played pivotal roles in establishing Nepal Open University in 2016 and founding the NepalDalitInfo Network in 2003. His contributions have been recognized with prestigious honors such as the Fellowship of the American College of Epidemiology and the Canadian Public Health Association's Honorary Life Membership Award.

Currently serving as the chairperson of Sahayatra International Alliance for Social Justice, Dr. Rasali recently spoke with **SOUTH ASIA TIME** regarding the upcoming Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, scheduled for May 25-27 in Toronto under the auspices of Sahayatra. This significant

event aims to foster solidarity towards equality, social justice, and the abolition of caste-based discrimination prevalent in Nepal and India.

In an exclusive interview, Dr. Rasali outlined the conference's objectives, emphasizing a comprehensive exploration of historical developments, current realities, and future visions for abolishing caste discrimination. The agenda includes discussions on global caste impacts affecting over 250 million marginalized individuals, examining issues ranging from socio-economic disparities to the implications of caste systems on health and cultural identities.

Over 15 distinguished academic leaders from the United States, Canada, India, and Nepal have confirmed their participation, alongside numerous grassroots activists and scholars expected to contribute through research presentations and policy analyses. The conference aims to culminate in the "Toronto Declaration," guiding future actions in research, education, activism, and policy-making across international platforms, including engagements with the United Nations.

Looking ahead, Dr. Rasali discussed plans to sustain momentum post-conference, envisioning follow-up initiatives and future global gatherings in cities like London, Washington/Baltimore, and Hong Kong in collaboration with local stakeholders and academic institutions.

In addressing the historical roots of caste systems in Nepal and India, Dr. Rasali highlighted their profound impacts on social, economic, and political exclusion among Dalit communities today. He underscored the urgent need for structural reforms and effective enforcement of constitutional protections to dismantle entrenched discrimination and ensure equitable representation and access to resources.

Regarding persisting challenges, Dr. Rasali attributed the persistence of caste-based discrimination to systemic barriers rather than individual actions. Despite constitutional safeguards, he pointed out the slow progress in translating legal protections into tangible benefits for marginalized communities, citing institutional inertia and inadequate legislative measures as key obstacles.

The intersectionality of caste and gender emerged as another critical theme, with Dr. Rasali underscoring the compounded vulnerabilities faced by Dalit women. He highlighted the role of intergenerational trauma and its adverse health outcomes, urging targeted interventions to address these disparities effectively.

Reflecting on effective strategies, Dr. Rasali emphasized the pivotal role of political representation and grassroots initiatives in challenging caste-based discrimination. He advocated for comprehensive policy frameworks encompassing educational reforms, economic empowerment, and social inclusion measures, stressing the need for scalable solutions to achieve widespread impact.

As the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 approaches, Dr. Rasali's insights underscore a resolute commitment to advancing social justice and equality, marking a significant milestone in the global movement against caste-based discrimination.

Published on: February 21, 2025

## Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 being organized in Toronto, Call for registration



**GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025**  
Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Abolition of Caste System  
25-27 May 2025 | Toronto, Canada

**MEET OUR SPEAKERS**

- Dr. Steve Folmar**  
Associate Professor of Anthropology  
Associate Chair of the Department of Cultural Applied Anthropology Wake Forest University, USA
- Dr. Anne Murphy**  
Associate Professor of History  
University of British Columbia
- Dr. Laurence Simon**  
Professor of International Development and Sustainability  
Director of the Center for Global Development and Sustainability at Brandon University
- Dr. Madan Pariyar**  
Chairperson  
Samata Foundation
- Durga Sob**  
Dalit Female Rights Activist  
Feather FEDO
- Dr. Man Bahadur Bishwakarma**  
Nepal Former Secretary of Nepal  
the first from Dalit Community  
Professor

**Solidarity By:**

Logos of various organizations including FACT, SADAN, DIGNITYPOST, RDN Nepal, Grassroots, MASS - Nepal, DRL, DRL Online, DRL Youth Alliance, SAMATA foundation, Agniya Media Center, PDRC, and others.

**Toronto, 21 February 2025** – Sahayatra International Alliance for Social Justice-Canada, a non-government organization registered in Canada – in coordination with various organizations from South Asia and North America, is organizing the **Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025**. The event will be held in Toronto, Canada, from May 25 to May 27, with the main theme ;**Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Abolition of the Caste System.** “

“Over 260 million people worldwide face inhumane treatment and discrimination based on caste, race, and descent. While caste-based discrimination originated in South Asia, it has now spread globally,” said Dr Drona Rasali, chair of the organizing committee of the global conference. “In this context, this global conference will focus on generating international dialogue around best practices and solutions to address caste-based discrimination. It aims to draw the attention of national and international governments, academia, communities, relevant organizations, and target groups toward creating and implementing effective policies to build a discrimination-free world.”

The conference aims to bring together government agency, policymakers, and activists, representatives from civil society, organizations, businesses, academic researchers, scholars, and students to develop a shared platform for knowledge exchange. It seeks to unite stakeholders worldwide to discuss how caste systems and other oppressive practices can be abolished through collective efforts for social justice and equity. The conference will feature participants including international and national activists, policymakers, human rights defenders, civil society representatives, businesses, academics, researchers, students, journalists, professionals, and social advocates engaged in campaigns against discrimination.



“So far, we have received confirmation from 15 keynote and invited speakers including distinguished scholars, professors and researchers, and more are expected through their abstract paper submissions . We are optimistic that this conference will serve as a shared forum for participants to present their experiences, ideas, and initiatives, with a special focus on caste discrimination in Nepal (the focus country),” said Santosh Bishwakarma, the main coordinator of the organizing committee of the global conference. “Furthermore, the conference aims to foster international solidarity in the fight against discrimination.”

The discussions will cover a range of topics, including the impacts of caste discrimination, personal experiences of those affected, case-studies, reviews of international laws and their implementation, global efforts to eliminate discrimination, knowledge transfer, research on Dalit-related issues, and best practices and solutions to address caste-based discrimination. The conference will also focus on organizational development, future strategies, and creating an equitable and socially just society. A venue of Canada Convention Centre in Brampton is chosen to accommodate approximately 300 participants from around the world who are expected to attend.

To register for the conference, please visit the Sahayatra website at [Home | Antidiscrimination](#) In order to make this program a success, we sincerely appeal for the participation and solidarity of all human rights activists and organizations active in the field of human rights.

**Please contact for further information:**

Organizing Committee

Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025

Toronto- Canada

Sahayatra- International Alliance for Social Justice – [Canadainfo@sahayatraitl.com](mailto:Canadainfo@sahayatraitl.com)

## South Asia Time

### Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025 being organised in Toronto

February 25, 2025

The banner features the logo for the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025, which includes a circular emblem with three stylized figures and the text "GCFWC 2025". Below it is the tagline "Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice and Abolition of Caste System" and the dates "25-27 May 2025 | Toronto, Canada". To the right is a photograph of the Toronto skyline at sunset. In the center, the text "MEET OUR SPEAKERS" is displayed above six circular portraits of speakers: Dr. Steve Folmar, Dr. Anne Murphy, Dr. Laurence Simon, Dr. Madan Pariyar, Durga Sob, and Dr. Man Bahadur Bishwakarma. Below the portraits, each speaker's name and a brief bio are provided. At the bottom, a section titled "Solidarity By:" displays numerous logos of partner organizations from South Asia and North America.

**MEET OUR SPEAKERS**

**Dr. Steve Folmar**  
Associate Professor of Anthropology  
Associate Chair of the Department of Cultural/Applied Anthropology Wake Forest University, USA

**Dr. Anne Murphy**  
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Nepal Former Secretary of Nepal  
the first from Dalit Community  
Professor

**Solidarity By:**

Logos of various organizations including FACT, FEEDO, NEPCOM, SADAN, DNF Canada, NASO, Dignity Post, RDN Nepal, Jagran Media Center, and PDRC.

**Toronto —** Sahayatra-Canada, a non-government organization registered in Canada – in coordination with various organizations from South Asia and North America, is organizing the **Global Conference for a Caste-Free World 2025**. The event will be held in Toronto, Canada, from May 25 to May 27, with the main theme “**Building Solidarity towards Equality, Social Justice, and the Abolition of the Caste System.**”

“Over 260 million people worldwide face inhumane treatment and discrimination based on caste, race, and descent. While caste-based discrimination originated in South Asia, it has now spread globally,” said Dr Drona Rasali, chair of the organizing committee of the global conference. “The global conference will focus on generating international dialogue around best practices and solutions to address caste-based discrimination. It aims to draw the attention of national and international governments, communities, relevant organizations, and target groups toward creating and implementing effective policies to build a discrimination-free world,” he added.

The conference aims to bring together government agency, policymakers, and activists, representatives from civil society, organizations, businesses, academic researchers, scholars, and students to develop a shared platform for knowledge exchange. It seeks to unite stakeholders

worldwide to discuss how caste systems and other oppressive practices can be abolished through collective efforts for justice and equity, according to the organizers.

The conference will feature participants including international and national activists, policymakers, human rights defenders, civil society representatives, businesses, academics, researchers, students, journalists, professionals, and social advocates engaged in campaigns against discrimination.

“So far, we have received confirmation from 15 speakers including distinguished scholars, professors and researchers. We are optimistic that this conference will serve as a shared forum for participants to present their experiences, ideas, and initiatives, with a special focus on caste discrimination in Nepal (the *focus country*),” said Santosh Bishwakarma, convener of the global conference. “Furthermore, the conference aims to foster international solidarity in the fight against discrimination.”

The discussions will cover a range of topics, including the impacts of caste discrimination, personal experiences of those affected, case-studies, reviews of international laws and their implementation, global efforts to eliminate discrimination, knowledge transfer, research on Dalit-related issues, and best practices and solutions to address caste-based discrimination. The conference will also focus on organizational development, future strategies, and creating an equitable and socially just society. Approximately 500 participants from around the world are expected to attend.

Details of the conference can be accessed at <https://www.sahayatraitl.com/global-conference>.

# The Himalayan

Himalayan Times, Kathmandu. Published: 11:19 am May 27, 2025

## Opinion

### Ending caste discrimination: Can this be done in a decade?

By **Simone Galimberti**



File - A Dalit woman holding a lantern in a protest rally demanding constitutional rights for Dalits, in New Baneshwor, Kathmandu, on Saturday. Photo: THT

Enlarging the debate and involving other members of the society must be seen as an indispensable aspect of this fight against caste discrimination. Will non-Dalit citizens be ready to listen?

Caste discrimination remains a persistent issue in Nepal, and members of the Dalit community are still victims of many abuses. While there have been considerable improvements following the civil

war that the Maoists justified as a painful but needed episode to unshackle Nepal from a political system based on the primacy of certain castes over the others, there is still so much that must be done.

**Two questions must be answered.**

First, how to change this status quo? Second, is it even possible to forecast a timeline within the next 10 years to truly get rid of caste discrimination?

To better understand the issues at stake, I approached two renowned members of the Dalit Community, one living in the Nepali diaspora, the other based in the country. In many ways, both have set the benchmark on what citizens from the Dalit community can do in terms of personal and professional success.

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali is a distinguished academician – a veterinarian by background – based in British Columbia, Canada. Dr Man Bahadur Bishwakarma is the first member of the Dalit Community to reach the position of Secretary in the bureaucracy. He is also a former Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Brandeis University in the USA and holds a PhD in Social Inclusion in Microfinance in 2010 from Tribhuvan University. Both of them are leading, together with other activists, the organisation of the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World held in Brampton, Canada, from May 25 to 27.

I wanted to know from them about the current status of the play in terms of the fight against discrimination and what should be done. Additionally, I was curious to learn why a conference in Canada can become an important milestone to create a just society in Nepal and the whole of South Asia.

First of all, one of my takeaways from the conversation is that improvements since the end of the civil war and more specifically since the promulgation of the new constitution in 2015 should not give space to complacency. Dr Rasali highlighted the importance of dealing with casteism in Nepal as a matter of structural changes needed within the society.

"Legislation alone," he shared, "are not enough, we need a systemic shift in the society and, in particular, within the political structure of the country."

At a personal level, I do believe that laws are paramount, including a stronger affirmative legislation framework even though quotas always trigger a strong debate about fairness and their impact.

As Dalit intellectual and commentator Mitra Pariyar often writes for the Kathmandu Post, to tackle caste discrimination, we need a profound rethinking of religious practices and rituals. Religion has enabled and allowed discrimination to spread within the society, and this must be taken into account.

According to Dr. Bishwakarma, there are three key areas that must be confronted with urgency. First, even before coming up with new legislation, the existing ones must be fully enforced. A good

legal framework is already available, but it must be implemented. Politicians must show a strong will and determination to show the way in this area beyond the usual rhetoric.

Second, representation in government is essential. "We are still very far from it. The number of members of the Dalit community in the highest echelons of the Federal Administration is still negligible, and this is unacceptable", Bishwakarma explained.

Third, we need equitable distribution of resources. Dr Bishwakarma brought up the example of Lumbini Province where in the past only 0.1 per cent of budget resources were allocated to uphold the political and social economic rights of Dalit citizens who are approximately 40 per cent of the population in the province.

Moreover, the budget at the federal, provincial and local levels is not designed based on the concept of social justice.

According to Dr. Rasali, these three pillars must be integrated in a systemic and structural way, and political representation is paramount. "I was very focussed on trying to create more educational opportunities for youths from the Dalit Community," explained Dr Rasali, who also played an instrumental role in setting up Nepal Open University.

"But I realised that these efforts, while key, are at risk of being undercut by structural inequities existing in the society. That's why having more citizens from the Dalit community holding political power in real rather than tokenistic ways is indispensable if we want to change the status quo," he said.

According to Dr. Bishwakarma what is needed is to challenge and defeat the whole caste system and not just focussing on fighting caste discrimination.

But why organise a conference in Canada? One of the most important goals of the organisers is to "internationalise" the issue of caste discrimination. The aim was to better involve and engage the international community, including the United Nations, by conducting academically rigorous events

The Global Conference for a Caste-Free World that had as its academic partner a world class institution, the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, and where around 400 participants attended, was the first step in this process.

The outcome of the conference was a declaration with an ambitious but essential target: eliminate caste discrimination by 2035. Will 10 years from now be enough?

This is a priority, but how to ensure that broad coalitions of citizens come together to fight unjust systems? Enlarging the debate and involving other members of the society must be seen as an indispensable aspect of this fight. Will non-Dalit citizens be ready to listen?

Will those involved in the caste discrimination movement be capable of reaching them out persuasively and in an engaging way? Answering these questions might help reach the 2035 target and relegate discrimination to the annals of history.

[#Caste discrimination](#)



Caste-Discrimination has received the exclusive interview with Professor Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, the Chairperson of the Global Conference.

**The excerpts: PROF. DR. DRONA PRAKASH RASALI, Chairperson, Global Conference for a Caste Free World 2025, Organizing Committee**

**What issues do this global conference address globally?**

This global conference will discuss the conditions and plights of over 250 million people worldwide who have traditionally suffered due to caste-based discrimination. Key topics of discussion will include the historical evolution of caste structures, their socio-economic, cultural, and health-related impacts, educational policies and campaigns necessary for caste abolition, policy-making for social justice and reparative inclusion efforts, the impact of caste discrimination on migrant diaspora communities in western countries, and the implications of caste structures in the context of climate change. More than 20 renowned academic personalities from the United States, Canada, India, and Nepal have already confirmed their participation as speakers. Additionally, researchers, university students, and policy analysts will present their findings through posters and oral presentations. Activists working at both local and international levels against caste-based discrimination will also participate.

**Does this conference release “Toronto Declaration” also?**

At the conclusion of the conference, the “Toronto Declaration” will be issued, which will provide guidance for future research, educational programs, civil society activities, and policy-making processes. Special emphasis will be placed on coordinating with local, provincial, and national governments, as well as the international community, including the United Nations, to implement the recommendations outlined in the declaration. There are also consideration of plans to organize similar future conferences in various cities such as London, Washington-Baltimore, and Hong Kong in collaboration with local institutions and academic organizations.

**As a writer, researcher and professor, what are the impacts of Caste Systems in Nepal and India?**

From the medieval era to the present, the feudal state system in Nepal and India has attempted to legitimize caste-based discrimination through religious justifications. However, recent anthropological and genetic studies have shown that human societies are inherently mixed. It is believed that caste structures in the Indian subcontinent began to develop nearly 4,000 years ago when ancient Eurasian pastoralists and Iranian agricultural farmers migrated to the region. Initially, caste divisions were introduced under the pretext of labor division, primarily benefiting the ruling classes. Since this structure was human-made “social construct”, Dalits (historically marginalized communities) have remained systematically excluded, leading to their social, economic, cultural, and political marginalization. According to Nepal’s National Social Exclusion Survey (2018), Hill Dalits are over 12 times more excluded than Brahmins and Chhetris, while Terai Dalits face nine times more exclusion. Despite comprising nearly 15% of Nepal’s total population, Dalits are virtually absent from any positions of power. It is also notable that the caste-based crime incidents against Dalits are rising in India and Nepal in the past one decade.

**What do you see the barriers of Dalits overall development and what do you suggest for a caste-free world/ or reform?**

*Caste discrimination is a structural issue rather than a matter of individual capability or willpower. The Constitution of Nepal recognizes Dalits as the most vulnerable and marginalized community and provisions for free education up to higher levels, reservations in employment, inclusive political representation, and access to land and other benefits to empower them. However, full implementation of these provisions is still lacking, as the parliament has yet to enact the necessary laws and regulations.* Dalit families without land ownership rights are deprived of education, making it difficult for them to enter the formal job market, thereby forcing them to live in a state of perpetual economic deprivation. Due to limited access to resources and opportunities, Dalits are unable to attain positions of influence, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion.

**How do you assess the role of Human Rights Mechanisms in Nepal and globally ?**

Human rights mechanisms have proven effective in addressing caste discrimination. For instance, Canada's strong human rights framework enables legal interventions to combat caste-based discrimination effectively. Nepal and India can also work toward eliminating caste discrimination by implementing similar practical human rights frame works, in addition to the full enforcement legal and constitutional provisions. Dalit women face the dual burden of caste and gender discrimination. They bear the brunt of household responsibilities while also enduring the worst impacts of caste-based oppression. Additionally, intergenerational psychological stress has been observed to negatively impact their health. A study conducted by this author in the United States found that African-American women experiencing such stress had higher rates of low birth weight in newborns.

**What would be the way forward in future?**

Researchers emphasize that ensuring political representation for Dalits is crucial in eradicating caste-based discrimination. Legal provisions must be established to improve access to education, employment opportunities, and economic empowerment. If these measures are implemented at local, provincial, and national levels, significant positive changes can be achieved. As we move past the first quarter of the 21st century, the Toronto Declaration is expected to provide objective validation for a global movement aimed at eliminating caste-based and hereditary oppression. Sahayatra International, along with allied solidarity organizations, will advocate for the implementation of the declaration by engaging with the United Nations, relevant national agencies, and stakeholders through communication, dialogue, and action. *Humanity must free itself from the unnatural, unnecessary, and unjust burden of caste hierarchy and classification while ensuring equality and social justice. The dismantling of caste-based structures is imperative to fostering an environment where every individual is treated with dignity and respect.* To achieve this, the international community, including the United Nations, state governments, human rights organizations, social activist groups, educational institutions, and media, must collectively focus on the following key agenda points:

*First, Ensuring Political Representation:* Justice-based participation of Dalit and oppressed communities must be guaranteed in all branches of government.

*Second, Legal and Policy Reforms:* Structural caste discrimination should be addressed at its root through legislative measures and policy improvements.

*Third, Economic and Educational Support:* Economic restructuring is necessary to provide financial and educational assistance to marginalized communities.

*Fourth, Cultural Transformation:* Discriminatory traditions must be challenged to promote inclusivity and societal change.

*Fifth, Addressing Health Disparities:* Relevant stake holders should work toward raising awareness and preventing the adverse health effects caused by caste-based discrimination, such as intergenerational trauma and psychological stress.

*Sixth, Leadership Development:* Programs should be implemented to empower, strengthen, and make Dalit leadership more accountable.

*Seventh, Allies from the Mainstream:* Additionally, mainstream political and leadership figures must also undergo orientation and education to build allies among them with the clear understanding of the principles and perspectives of caste equality and social justice, which have often been found misrepresented.

**Finally,** I would urge all governments and state that this is the time for action, as the era of waiting for caste equality and social justice is over. Thank you all and hope for your effective participation and constructive suggestion and feedback there to make this conference a grand success!

Source: <https://archive.org/details/voiceless-voices-2025-april-june-issue-no-4>.

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NEPAL NEWS, June 1, 2025-- DIASPORA

## Global Dalit Conference in Toronto urges formation of TRCs

TORONTO: The first-ever World Conference for a Caste-Free World, held in Toronto from May 25 to 27, 2025, concluded with a strong call for global action to dismantle caste-based discrimination.

The event, attended by delegates from Nepal, India, Canada, the U.S., the UK, and other countries, issued a 17-point Toronto Declaration demanding the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) in countries where caste-based systems persist. These commissions, the declaration stated, are essential to address historical injustices and chart a roadmap for the permanent elimination of caste hierarchies.

Despite the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserting that all human beings are born free and equal, the conference emphasized that over 250 million people—including Dalits in South Asia, Burakumin in Japan, Roma across Europe, Haratin in Mauritania, and Quilombolas in Brazil—continue to face structural discrimination based on birth.

In India alone, 57,582 crimes were recorded against Scheduled Castes in 2022, marking a 13% rise from the previous year. In Nepal, caste-based exclusion remains deeply entrenched, with Dalit communities reportedly facing 9 to 14 times more discrimination than dominant castes over the past decade.

The Toronto Declaration proposed several key actions, including the creation of Dalit-led development banks to support traditional artisans and entrepreneurs, the integration of anti-caste education into school curricula, and the establishment of global research centers to document the socio-economic impact of casteism.

It called for a cultural shift, including a review of religious and traditional practices that perpetuate hierarchy, while underscoring the need for inclusive policies and leadership from within Dalit and oppressed communities. The declaration also recommended setting up an international monitoring mechanism to track progress on caste elimination efforts worldwide.

Devraj Bishwakarma, Chair of Nepal's National Dalit Commission, highlighted the economic cost of caste discrimination, stating that Nepal loses an estimated 10% of its GDP annually—about NPR 600 billion—due to the exclusion of Dalit communities. He cited Nepal Human Rights Reports and other studies showing the gap between constitutional provisions and actual implementation, noting that although Nepal criminalizes caste-based discrimination, enforcement remains weak and victims struggle to get justice and compensation.

Former government secretary Dr. Man Bahadur BK referenced a recent study by the Dignity Initiative, revealing that in Lumbini Province, only 3% of the budget over the past five years was allocated for marginalized communities, who make up 72% of the population. Shockingly, Dalits received only 0.1% of that allocation.

In contrast, Nepal's Ambassador to Canada, Bharat Raj Paudyal, acknowledged that while Nepal has made progress in addressing caste-based discrimination, more remains to be done. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring equal rights and greater political participation for Dalits.

Speakers from across academia, activism, and government echoed the need for global solidarity. Dr. Rajratna Ashok Ambedkar, President of the Buddhist Society of India, emphasized that caste continues to condemn millions to inhumane treatment solely based on birth.

Harvard scholar Dr. Suraj Yengde warned that legal reforms alone are insufficient and called for cultural transformation and intra-community support. Other notable speakers included Dr. Karun Karki, Dr. Bishnu Maya Pariyar, Durga Sob, Dr. Anne Murphy, Dr. David Gellner, and Prof. Uttam Gauli, among others.

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali, Chair of the organizing committee and representative of the Emotional Wellbeing Institute of Canada, presented research on how caste-based oppression harms public health. Additional speakers from Dalit organizations across the world, including Jai Birdi (Canada), Om Prakash BK Gahtoraj (Nepal), and Dr. Man Bishwakarma (Native Arts Academy, Kathmandu), contributed diverse perspectives.

The conference was jointly organized by Sahyatra-Canada and other institutions across South Asia and North America. Coordinator Santosh Bishwakarma noted that the event helped build international solidarity in the movement to eliminate caste discrimination globally.

[https://nepalnews.com/s/diaspora/global-dalit-conference-in-toronto-urges-formation-of-trcs/?utm\\_source=nepalipatro&utm\\_medium=np\\_mobile&utm\\_campaign=np\\_news](https://nepalnews.com/s/diaspora/global-dalit-conference-in-toronto-urges-formation-of-trcs/?utm_source=nepalipatro&utm_medium=np_mobile&utm_campaign=np_news)



March 21, 2024 at 4:59 pm

## The burden of Structural Racism

- Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali

**Nepali version of this article was published today in Nagarik News National Daily of Nepal at the link below:** [https://nagariknews.nagariknetwork.com/opinion/1430428-1710983517.html?click\\_from=category](https://nagariknews.nagariknetwork.com/opinion/1430428-1710983517.html?click_from=category)



### संरचनात्मक जातिवादको बोझ

Remembering the racially charged massacre carried out by the white apartheid government's police on the black community in Sharpeville Township, South Africa, on March 21, 1960, is still relevant today. While celebrating the International Day for elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, it is now more important than ever to understand the pervasive racial divisions in modern society through the structural nature of racism.

The current anthropological, and ancient archaeological and genomic evidence have indicated that the disparities between human groups originated during the transition from ancient pastoralism to agriculture, where the unequal distribution of agricultural surplus ensued by the vested interests of the dominant groups. This phenomenon subsequently spread globally. Despite arriving in the 21st century, when the values and recognition of human dignity and human rights have been established

from the world view that sternly challenge the medieval notion of social divisions, the system of racial discrimination still exists in society due to the deep-rooted nature of structural racism.

Thus, caste systems have developed over time in various regions around the world, such as the varna-based caste system prevalent in South Asia, racial discrimination against African-Americans and indigenous peoples in the United States, settlers' colonial racism against indigenous peoples in Canada, inter-tribal divisions among the races in West Africa, the infamous apartheid racial segregation in South Africa, the casta system in Latin America, and other forms of hereditary social hierarchies that are still active in Eastern Asia.

Regardless of whether they are based on color-coded racism or any other form of descent-based discrimination, social stratification systems share three common elements: dehumanization, inequality, and stigmatization, where a powerful group seeks to maintain its dominance by exerting special rights, privileges and power over a marginalized groups, depriving the latter of all resources and facilities solely for the purpose of their exploitation.

During the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the United States, the people of color including African-Americans, Latinx, indigenous, and Asian individuals were disproportionately affected and impacted by the pandemic as the more likely to be infected and dying due to the disease. The main reason behind this was the existing structural racial disparities, whereby these affected individuals had a higher likelihood of contracting COVID-19 due to their dense presence in the proximity to frontline service sector jobs. Amidst this, the global movement against racism sparked by the killing of George Floyd in the United States brought widespread attention to the concept that caste is the fundamental root of all racial divisions, as proposed by the book "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents" by the New York Times Best Seller Author Isabel Wilkerson.

Previously, it was loosely taken for granted that within the realm of global thought that the concept of caste as seen in America's racism, was independent of the varna-based caste system of the Indian subcontinent. Now, all the scientific evidence leaves no ground to doubt that casteism based on the hierarchical and structural discrimination as global caste serves as a common root cause for descent based social, economic, and cultural disparities. Understanding this shared basis of social stratification rooted in caste-based discrimination is essential for addressing concerns relevant to global humanity. In order for the complete eradication of discrimination based on caste that still remains an humongous task, integrating the evidence of the global extent of discrimination based on caste into the understanding of the historically created global social structure is crucial and is achievable by unifying global knowledge and literature on caste.

The common origin and the tale of Aryan supremacy, along with the deep-rooted Western racist caste discrimination and South Asian varna-based caste discrimination, had been flourishing in the global colonial era since the 17th century. While the negative impact of structural racism from the historical legacy profoundly affecting Black people and Indigenous Americans in American society is well-documented, Nepal's first anthropologist, Dor Bahadur Bista, established that the

inhumane caste discrimination persisted in the country as an imported phenomenon from the 18th century onward.

Structural racism in America and structural caste discrimination in South Asia impose the burden of inequality on every aspect of the lives of the oppressed. While economists and social scientists have provided interpretations of this burden in terms of class, analyzing it through statistical analysis reveals that entrenched societal inequalities are perpetuated through both the primary factor of caste division and various intermediary factors such as education, income, housing, employment, health, social harmony, and more. Especially considering the widespread caste-based discrimination spanning centuries, the burden of intergenerational trauma persists among affected communities, leading to long-term mental stress. This chronic stress can manifest physically, leading to conditions like diabetes, hypertension, mental disorders, due to allostatic load, which is the neuronal and hormonal imbalance resulting from prolonged exposure to stressors. In the flip side, the continuation of the evil practice of socially constructed caste discrimination even in the 21st century has become a burden on whole human society.

Especially in the context of Nepal, the country has reached a significant historical turning point in the 21st century. Progressing from the rigidly hierarchical caste system entrenched in religious tradition and the first codified Muluki Ain (Civil Code) of 1854, which institutionalized caste-based discrimination, but transitioning now to the present where all forms of discrimination are progressively being prohibited by the democratically oriented constitution. This signifies a transformational shift towards a future aligned with global standards. However, the implementation of newly enacted laws aimed at building a society based on human values and dignity faces challenges, leading to the need for focused efforts in their execution and enforcement. Addressing these entrenched inequalities requires comprehensive state policies for reparation at the societal level. It is crucial to ensure appropriate representation of marginalized caste groups for the relevant bodies responsible for implementation and development of such reparative statutes and laws and policies.

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[Dignity Post](#), 08-10-2023 08:06

## Who are the Dalits in South Asia, and what should one know about them in the 21st century?



*Dalits are a large and historically marginalized group of South Asian people*

- Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali

Dalits are a large and historically marginalized group of South Asian people. In the 21st century, the estimated population of Dalits is between 250 and 260 million, roughly half the estimated population of Whites worldwide. India's Census in 2011 counted 201 million Dalits, making up 16.6% of the country's total population. In Nepal's 2021 national census, nearly 4 million people from 14 major Dalit caste groups accounted for 13% of the country's population.

The term "Dalit" means "oppressed," derived from the Indo-Aryan root word "Dal," which translates to "press hard" or "oppress." The word was first coined by the social reformer of India Jyotirao Phule in the 1930s and popularized by Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, who is revered as the Father of the Indian Constitution. In the Indian Constitution, Dalits are called "Scheduled Castes." Nepal's new Constitution formally recognized the traditionally oppressed people using the word, "Dalit". The word is dynamic, signifying living humans, and subject to change in status, as it is an adjective-

noun used to refer the “oppressed people”, just like the people of certain races referred to as “racialized” in the Western world.

Dalits encompass diverse occupational castes, traditionally living alongside other groups but often segregated economically and socially. Misconceptions label them merely as "cleaners", especially in India, yet they encompass traditional occupations akin to artisans, engineers, chemists, and technologists, providing various essential services that are equivalent to various professions in modern society. For example, an illiterate Dalit old man, who is a goldsmith in a remote hill village in Nepal can clean the dust mixed with gold from his workshop, separate dirt and work with acids, do the meticulous panning work with water, and finally produce a piece of purified gold, not to mention his creative artistry creating amazing gold ornaments that are much like those sold even in the US markets today. One may even chuckle to know that the old goldsmith also manages to take out an aching tooth of a person of any caste, using his rusty pair of pliers, as there would be no dentist in the remote village.

The caste system of South Asia, originating nearly 4,000 years ago as a division of labor based on skills, evolved into a rigid caste hierarchy that favored dominant groups. It is also a historical fact that caste discrimination intensified with rigid statutory law after the 17<sup>th</sup> Century when Europeans colonized India and elsewhere; that happened around the same time when racial slavery began in Europe and the Americas. Notably, caste categories differ between India and Nepal, evolving throughout history based on rulers' decrees.

In the 21st century, caste discrimination and untouchability practices are legally abolished in India and Nepal. Any reference to the "U-word" in the context of Dalits should be considered derogatory, akin to the "N-word" in the United States. It's essential to understand the historical context of the term "Dalit," which was created to empower and emancipate the historically oppressed people. Recognizing this context is crucial for reparations to address the harm caused by centuries of discrimination and trauma.

Caste discrimination against Dalits is banned in contemporary India and Nepal, and any such practice is punishable as a hate crime. In practical terms to understand in the context of today, Dalits are the descendants of Scheduled Caste people as defined by the Constitution of India, and the descendants of "water unacceptable" caste people as labeled by the Muluki Ain (Civil Code) of Nepal promulgated in 1854. These historical realities require compensatory reparations rather than hate in the 21st century.

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## **RELEVANT PEER REVIEWED RESEARCH ARTICLES**



## Global Castes

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### ABSTRACT

Caste has been thought of as an institution intimately tied to the Indian past and present. However, caste as a, social system invested in purity, pollution, endogamy, hierarchy, and inflexibility locked in the rigidity of birth, is found in major societies across the world. Yet, caste has not received the desired attention outside India. Nor it has become a social, economic, and political concern of the world. Everyday caste oppression is indicative of the gross human rights violations wrought upon Dalit and other caste oppressed groups, not least in India, but globally. Drawing from caste studies in south Asia, Africa, Latin America, and North America, this paper inaugurates pioneering inquiry into caste discrimination as a global human rights concern. By complicating, to complicate and facilitate the conduits of hierarchical societies, it posits the importance of global caste theory as a way to synthesize the experiences of outcastes of each society.

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**KEYWORDS** Global caste; African caste system; caste in America; descent-based discrimination; race-caste; dalit-black lives matter

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### ABSTRACT

Caste has been thought of as an institution intimately tied to the Indian past and present. However, caste as a, social system invested in purity, pollution, endogamy, hierarchy, and inflexibility locked in the rigidity of birth, is found in major societies across the world. Yet, caste has not received the desired attention outside India. Nor it has become a social, economic, and political concern of the world. Everyday caste oppression is indicative of the gross human rights violations wrought upon

Dalit and other caste oppressed groups, not least in India, but globally. Drawing from caste studies in south Asia, Africa, Latin America, and North America, this paper inauguates pioneering inquiry into caste discrimination as a global human rights concern. By complicating, to complicate and facilitate the conduits of hierarchical societies, it posits the importance of global caste theory as a way to synthesize the experiences of outcastes of each society.

**KEYWORDS:** [Global caste](#), [African caste system](#), [caste in America](#), [descent-based discrimination](#), [race-caste](#), [dalit-black lives matter](#)

Review

## Cross-Disciplinary Rapid Scoping Review of Structural Racial and Caste Discrimination Associated with Population Health Disparities in the 21st Century

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**Abstract:** A cross-disciplinary rapid scoping review was carried out, generally following the PRISMA-SCR protocol to examine historical racial and caste-based discrimination as structural determinants of health disparities in the 21st century. We selected 48 peer-reviewed full-text articles available from the University of Memphis Libraries database search, focusing on three selected case-study countries: the United States (US), Canada, and Nepal. The authors read each article, extracted highlights, and tabulated the thematic contents on structural health disparities attributed to racism or casteism. The results link historical racism/casteism to health disparities occurring in Black and African American, Native American, and other ethnic groups in the US; in Indigenous peoples and other visible minorities in Canada; and in the Dalits of Nepal, a population racialized by caste, grounded on at least four foundational theories explaining structural determinants of health disparities. The evidence from the literature indicates that genetic variations and biological differences (e.g., disease prevalence) occur within and between races/castes for various reasons (e.g., random gene mutations, geographic isolation, and endogamy). However, historical races/castes as socio-cultural constructs have no inherently exclusive basis of biological differences. Disregarding genetic discrimination based on pseudo-scientific theories, genetic testing is a valuable scientific means to achieve the better health of the populations. Epigenetic changes (e.g., weathering—the early aging of racialized women) due to the DNA methylation of genes among racialized populations are markers of intergenerational trauma due to racial/caste discrimination. Likewise, chronic stresses resulting from intergenerational racial/caste discrimination cause an “allostatic load”, characterized by an imbalance of neuronal and hormonal dysfunction, leading to occurrences of chronic diseases (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, and mental health) at disproportionate rates among racialized populations. Major areas identified for reparative policy changes and interventions for eliminating the health impacts of racism/casteism include areas of issues on health disparity research, organizational structures, programs and processes, racial justice in population health, cultural trauma, equitable healthcare system, and genetic discrimination.



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**Keywords:** racism; casteism; discrimination; health disparities; structural determinants of health disparities; socio-economic status; allostatic load

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A cross-disciplinary rapid scoping review was carried out, generally following the PRISMA-SCR protocol to examine historical racial and caste-based discrimination as structural determinants of health disparities in the 21st century. We selected 48 peer-reviewed full-text articles available from the University of Memphis Libraries database search, focusing on three selected case-study countries: the United States (US), Canada, and Nepal. The authors read each article, extracted highlights, and tabulated the thematic contents on structural health disparities attributed to racism or casteism. The results link historical racism/casteism to health disparities occurring in Black and African American, Native American, and other ethnic groups in the US; in Indigenous peoples and other visible minorities in Canada; and in the Dalits of Nepal, a population racialized by caste, grounded on at least four foundational theories explaining structural determinants of health disparities. The evidence from the literature indicates that genetic variations and biological differences (e.g., disease prevalence) occur within and between races/castes for various reasons (e.g., random gene mutations, geographic isolation, and endogamy). However, historical races/castes as socio-cultural constructs have no inherently exclusive basis of biological differences. Disregarding genetic discrimination based on pseudo-scientific theories, genetic testing is a valuable scientific means to achieve the better health of the populations. Epigenetic changes (e.g., weathering—the early aging of racialized women) due to the DNA methylation of genes among racialized populations are markers of intergenerational trauma due to racial/caste discrimination. Likewise, chronic stresses resulting from intergenerational racial/caste discrimination cause an “allostatic load”, characterized by an imbalance of neuronal and hormonal dysfunction, leading to occurrences of chronic diseases (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, and mental health) at disproportionate rates among racialized populations. Major areas identified for reparative policy changes and interventions for eliminating the health impacts of racism/casteism include areas of issues on health disparity research, organizational structures, programs and processes, racial justice in population health, cultural trauma, equitable healthcare system, and genetic discrimination.

**Keywords:** [racism](#); [casteism](#); [discrimination](#); [health disparities](#); [structural determinants of health disparities](#); [socio-economic status](#); [allostatic load](#)

## Article

# Ecological Impacts of Structural Racism on Health Disparity Through Its Determinants and Mediating Factors: A Case Study on Low Birthweight in Three Race/Ethnicity Groups in the United States

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**Abstract:** Health disparities among populations across geographic regions, demographic and socio-economic groups are well documented; however, ecological studies which visually demonstrate health disparities associated with structural racism among racialized populations are limited. The purpose of this study was to examine low birthweight (LBW) as a measurable indicator of disproportionate health impacts across three race/ethnicity groups—non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic and non-Hispanic White—in the United States (US) for visualizing ecological manifestation of this disparity attributed to structural racism. We begin by providing the contextual background of structural racism through a literature review, and then more specifically, we examine LBW as a selected health indicator characterized with a socio-biological pathway of structural racism via socio-economic and politico-legal determinants and associated mediating factors to health disparities, from which we synthesized a visualization model with the indicators of structural racism reported in the literature reviewed. To further visualize these impacts, publicly available US County Health Ranking data for LBW, at the county level in two US states, Tennessee and Ohio, were analyzed to uncover area-based ecological health outcome—LBW. Significant correlation and scatter plots provided evidence of LBW as a racially sensitive health indicator associated with impacts of structural racism. These findings were further notable through examination of socio-economic determinants (e.g., race/ethnicity, income, education, and employment) and environmental factors such as housing issues as well as other underlying health conditions. Our case study has opened a window for visualizing disparity across non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, non-Hispanic White populations as demonstrated by the prevalence of LBW disparity through its determinants and mediating factors at the county level. Potentially important policy implications for reparative change are drawn through our study findings that are salutary and/or reductive for addressing impacts of structural racism. Further studies are needed to fully understand the comprehensive web of area-based ecological factors impacting various health outcomes through the impacts of structural racism.



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**Keywords:** structural racism; determinants of health disparity; low birthweight

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## Abstract

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health disparities associated with structural racism among racialized populations are limited. The purpose of this study was to examine low birthweight (LBW) as a measurable indicator of disproportionate health impacts across three race/ethnicity groups—non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic and non-Hispanic White—in the United States (US) for visualizing ecological manifestation of this disparity attributed to structural racism. We begin by providing the contextual background of structural racism through a literature review, and then more specifically, we examine LBW as a selected health indicator characterized with a socio-biological pathway of structural racism via socio-economic and politico-legal determinants and associated mediating factors to health disparities, from which we synthesized a visualization model with the indicators of structural racism reported in the literature reviewed. To further visualize these impacts, publicly available US County Health Ranking data for LBW, at the county level in two US states, Tennessee and Ohio, were analyzed to uncover area-based ecological health outcome—LBW. Significant correlation and scatter plots provided evidence of LBW as a racially sensitive health indicator associated with impacts of structural racism. These findings were further notable through examination of socio-economic determinants (e.g., race/ethnicity, income, education, and employment) and environmental factors such as housing issues as well as other underlying health conditions. Our case study has opened a window for visualizing disparity across non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, non-Hispanic White populations as demonstrated by the prevalence of LBW disparity through its determinants and mediating factors at the county level. Potentially important policy implications for reparative change are drawn through our study findings that are salutary and/or reductive for addressing impacts of structural racism. Further studies are needed to fully understand the comprehensive web of area-based ecological factors impacting various health outcomes through the impacts of structural racism.

**Keywords:** structural racism; determinants of health disparity; low birthweight

**GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A CASTE FREE WORLD 2025 (MAY 25-27)**

**ABSTRACTS OF CONFERENCE PAPER PRESENTATIONS – INVITED DIRECT SUBMISSIONS AND  
EASYCHAIR PLATFORM SUBMISSIONS**

## INVITED/DIRECT SUBMISSIONS

### **Abstract # ADir-1: Inaugural Address**

**Title:** A caste-free world: A promise of equality without discrimination

**The author:** Fernand de Varennes, Former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

#### **Abstract:**

*A caste-free world is a world where the commitments of international human rights law are not merely lip-service, but where human rights are implemented. For caste-based minorities such as Dalits and others, deeds must reflect the words and commitments which human rights promise. Caste discrimination is perhaps one of the lesser known though profoundly disturbing areas where people find themselves marginalised and even dehumanised, and their rights most vulnerable, because of their so-called caste. The fight for a caste-free world where individuals are denied basic human dignity and equality because of their family, lineage and hereditary occupation is one which is far from won yet, though there have in recent years been some positive recognition and developments. However, in a world where some governments are turning towards more nationalistic policies and simultaneously appear to move away from the multilateral legal protection of human rights, the fight for a caste-free world must combine with others for a stronger global drive to protect the universal human rights of all of us.*

**Keywords:** Human rights; equality; discrimination; minorities.

## **Abstract # ADir-2 (Keynote address)**

**Title: Wellbeing, Ritual and Caste Freedom**

*...castes naturalize fallaciously a true culture. (Claude Levi-Strauss 1963).*

**Author:** Steve Folmar, Department of Anthropology, Department of Anthropology,  
Winston-Salem, NC 27109, United States. [folmarsj@wfu.edu](mailto:folmarsj@wfu.edu)

### **Abstract:**

In this presentation I address the all-important dimension of wellbeing as a key to freedom from caste oppression for Dalit people. I seek to do so by centering the role of ritual for bolstering the overall quality of life. First, I acknowledge the millennia through which Dalits have suffered the worst effects of caste oppression. Then I attempt to locate our current position on the journey to caste freedom, which will be achieved only when innumerable injustices are finally rectified. Among these injustices are the many assaults on the wellbeing of Dalit people many of which are enacted through rituals of oppression. Recent research and analysis strongly link the power of liberating rituals to improve wellbeing for Dalits, most powerful among them counter-rituals. We must understand this power in light of the tremendous resistance to equalizing caste that exists in today's world. Advances in wellbeing will be achieved slowly, through small but progressively effective steps taken toward erasing the mindset that caste is anything but unjust for the lived experience of Dalits. Advancing down a righteous path toward ultimate equality will depend on Dalit people drawing on the indefatigable strengths they have demonstrated in the past, of endurance, strength, creativity, and persistence. As these characteristics prevail over the deleterious effects of oppression, discrimination, exclusion and humiliation, Dalits' goals of equality will be ever more within their reach.

## **Abstract # ADir-3 (Poster presentation)**

### **Title: Human Rights and Caste Discrimination Situation in Nepal**

**Author:** Drona Prakash Rasali, Nepaldalitinfo International Network, Canada  
nepaldalitinfo@yahoo.com.

#### **Abstract:**

Nepal has experienced significant fluctuations in human rights over time, as reflected in the Human Rights Index as per V-Dem (2025) – processed by Our World in Data. The country's score has improved sharply as democratic system of government transitioned progressively greater democracy in various time points (Chart 1) in 1951 (2007 BS), 1959 (2015 BS), 1991 (2046 BS) and 2015 (2072 BS), from authoritarian monarchial rule. Especially in the 21st century's first decade surpassed the global average at certain points. However, despite legal reforms, caste-based discrimination remains a pressing human rights issue, particularly affecting Dalit communities. The level of overall (composite) discrimination and various other forms of discrimination across caste/ethnicity groups as shown by the indexes derived by the Nepal's National Social Exclusion Survey, 2018 is appalling that Hill Dalits and Terai Dalits suffers the most from all forms of discrimination.

The situation analysis findings includes the following:

#### *1. Legal Protections vs. Ground Reality:*

- a) The Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability Act (2011) criminalizes such practices.
- b) Nepal's Constitution (2015) prohibits caste-based discrimination.

Despite legal frameworks, Dalits face systemic exclusion in political representation, education, employment, and access to justice.

#### *2. Evidence of Human Rights Violations:*

##### *a) Violence & Discrimination situation::*

The National Human Rights Commission (2019) recorded 49 caste discrimination cases, but this spiked to 753 cases in 2020, including 34 murders. Dalit women face intersectional discrimination, suffering from higher rates of violence, exclusion, and forced labor. Inter-caste marriages between

Dalit and Non-Dalit young people have been facing fierce opposition leading to violence even up to murders of Dalits.

b) Economic & Social Inequality:

Dalits make up 13.09% of Nepal's population, yet remain underrepresented in leadership and resource distribution. Restricted access to land, education, and healthcare continues to hinder socio-economic mobility.

3. Human Rights Index & Caste-Based Discrimination:

a) Nepal's Human Rights Index shows marked improvement since 2006, coinciding with the end of the Maoist conflict and constitutional changes. However, caste-based discrimination persists despite Nepal's human rights gains, revealing a gap between policy and real-life experiences.

Call to Action is recommended as follows:

- 1) Stronger law enforcement to implement anti-discrimination policies effectively.
- 2) Educational reforms to promote caste equality from an early stage.
- 3) Community-led initiatives to empower Dalit voices and leadership.
- 4) Continued monitoring of Nepal's Human Rights Index to ensure inclusive progress.

**Author keywords:** Human rights, caste discrimination, Situation analysis, Nepal dalit info

## **Abstract # ADir-4 (Invited Speaker)**

**Title:** The Predicament of Religion: Caste, Hinduism, and Dalit Movements in Nepal

**Author:** Amar BK, University of Pittsburgh, United States. [amarbbk@gmail.com](mailto:amarbbk@gmail.com).

### **Abstract:**

Religion has been central to anti-caste thoughts and movements since at least the early twentieth century, as seen in the thoughts of Jyotirao Phule and B. R. Ambedkar in India and Bhagat Sarbjit in Nepal. However, for Dalit activists and scholars, religion—particularly Hinduism—remains an unsettled and contested question. Within anti-caste movements, perspectives on Hinduism vary significantly, often in contradictory ways. The dominant view considers caste as an essential component of Hinduism and, hence, finds it impossible for the religion to exist without caste. This view contends that a casteless society can be envisioned only outside Hinduism. Another view conversely assumes that Hinduism can be acceptable for Dalits if it eliminates caste-based discrimination and untouchability. These thoughts have shaped different responses: while some Dalits have converted to Christianity and Buddhism, others, particularly those influenced by Marxist thought, have embraced atheism, and still others have sought their emancipation within Hinduism.

In this presentation, I examine contemporary Nepali discourses on caste, religion, and the approaches for ending caste that are largely shaped by an understanding of caste in relation to Hinduism. I also explore the implications of these divergent views and approaches for the future of anti-caste movements. I will address the following questions: How has our understanding of caste and its relationship to Hinduism shaped our thoughts and anti-caste movements? What are the consequences of these divergent thoughts and approaches to the anti-caste movements? Has the debate over the relationship between caste and religion been beneficial, or has it created an impasse? Do we need new ways of thinking beyond religion?

Drawing on my observation of Nepali anti-caste movements, including interactions with Dalit activists, scholars, and ordinary people and a review of scholarly and public writings, I will interrogate the enduring dilemma on the relationship between caste and Hinduism in shaping Dalit resistance and visions of emancipation.

**Author keywords:** Religion, Caste, Anti-caste movement, Nepal.

## **Abstract # ADir-5**

**Title:** Intersectionality and Inclusivity in Action: Addressing Challenges on Caste and Gender Based Discrimination in Nepal

**Authors and affiliation:** Ms Durga Sob\* & Dr. Rabina G. Rasaily, Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), Lalitpur, Nepal

### **Abstract:**

In Nepal, caste-based discrimination and gender inequality intersect to create a complex web of social exclusion and injustice, particularly affecting Dalit women. These women face multiple burdens, one rooted in the caste system that relegates them to the status of untouchables and the other based on patriarchal gender norms that restrict their rights and opportunities. This presentation, titled "Intersectionality and Inclusivity in Action: Addressing Caste-Based and Gender Discrimination in Nepal", seeks to examine the compounded challenges faced by Dalit women through an intersectional lens and propose pathways toward a more inclusive and just society. Caste and gender-based discrimination are deeply entrenched in Nepalese society, with the Dalit community subjected to systemic marginalization and economic deprivation. The multiple discrimination experienced by Dalit women manifests in limited access to education, healthcare, employment, economic and participation in social and political spheres. These barriers not only hinder their personal development but also perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality across generations. The intersectional approach allows for a deeper understanding of how caste and gender roles converge to exacerbate the exclusion of Dalit women, making them more vulnerable to various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, sexual violence, and forced labor. The presentation will focus on the structural inequalities that limit the agency of Dalit women, exploring how their lived experiences are shaped by the interaction of caste-based discrimination and patriarchal gender norms. It will discuss the impacts of these intersecting oppressions on the rights of Dalit women to live with dignity, access resources, and exercise their agency. Furthermore, this session will highlight the importance of inclusivity in policy and program design, particularly in addressing the needs of Dalit women. Drawing from grassroots initiatives and advocacy efforts led by organizations such as the Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), the session will explore best practices and strategies that promote the social, political, and economic empowerment of Dalit women. The focus will be on creating platforms for their voices to be heard, facilitating their participation in decision-making processes, and ensuring that government policies and donor-funded programs are sensitive to the intersecting realities of caste and gender. Ultimately, this session aims to inspire a collective effort toward breaking down the barriers that perpetuate caste and gender discrimination in Nepal. It calls for a united approach that fosters intersectionality and inclusivity, ensuring that Dalit women's rights are recognized, respected, and protected, leading to a more equitable and just society for all.

**Author keywords::** Intersectionality, inclusivity, caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, Dalit women, Nepal, social justice, empowerment.

## **Abstract # ADir-6**

**Title:** Differential Impacts of Climate Change and Climate Injustice on *Dalits*: A case study from Nepal

**Author:** Dr. Madan Prasad Pariyar, Chairperson, Samata Foundation, Sanepa, Lalitpur, Nepal. madan.pariyar@samatafoundation.org

### **Abstract:**

In 2022, Samata Foundation, a leading NGO that works on *Dalit* issues, conducted a study on Causes of Climate Vulnerability, Conflict Dynamics and Existing Local Adaptive Capacities of *Dalit* Communities in Nepal. The study dealt with several issues and challenges, e.g., climate change hazards and risks, causes and drivers of climate vulnerability, coping strategies adopted by *Dalits*, and existing local adaptive capacities. It uncovered several important findings. Climate change has affected differently to different sect of people in Nepal. The *Dalits* who have less resilience capacities and resources, are victimized the maximum, and their plight to adapt to climate change, recover from climatic shocks and stresses, and access rescue and relief amenities during the climatic disaster are largely unaddressed. *Dalits* are more vulnerable to both natural and human-made disasters compared to non-*Dalits* due to their marginalized social position, the location of their homes (usually in marginal lands in the periphery of settlements), their vulnerable occupations (such as rubbish and sewage disposal, casual farm labour), and the nature of their housing (usually mud-built houses with thatched roofs).

Reflecting on the differential impacts of climate change and climate injustice on *Dalits*, the study points out that *Dalits* are not only more vulnerable prior to climate-induced disasters, their marginalization (emanating from caste-based hierarchy and untouchability) means they face discrimination during the rescue, relief and rehabilitation during and after climate-induced disasters. Women among the *Dalits* are hit the most from the climate change. The study points to multiple cases of climate injustice resulting from inequitable distribution of relief materials during and after disasters. It also shows that governments do not have disaster preparedness or recovery plans focused on *Dalit* communities.

More broadly, the relationship between caste discrimination and climate change reflected by the study offers some important insights into the emerging field of climate justice in Nepal and elsewhere in the Global South. In particular, the study emphasizes that in the discourse of climate justice, the climate crisis should be recognized as a social and political problem. *Dalits* being at the lowest strata from socio-political and economic perspectives are most affected by climatic disasters, and to ensure climate justice to these most disadvantaged communities in Nepal, their sufferings aggravated by differential impacts of climate change should be rightfully addressed.

Finally, the Samata Foundation's report on climate change and *Dalit* communities is the first of its kind but it only provides a broad overview of the topic. As such, more detailed studies should be done to examine the specific needs and priorities of *Dalits* related to climate change.

**Author keywords:** Differential Impacts. Climate Injustice, Caste Based Discrimination

## **Abstract # ADir-7**

**Title:** Historical beginning and progress of Dalit movement in Nepal

**Author:** Om Prakash VK Gahatraj, Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

### **Abstract:**

After getting back from India to Baglung of western Nepal in 1940 (1997 B. S.), Bhagat Sarvajeet Vishwakarma started Dalit movement to be free from untouchability and caste-based discrimination. Bhagat Ji requested all Dalits not to run workshops to produce agricultural tools unless and until non-Dalits stop untouchability and caste-based discrimination. On the petition report of some Brahmins led by Haegriv Dev Pant, Bhagat Ji and his friends were arrested by the local administration and were sent to jail in Baglung and Palpa. After a few years of the campaign they established 'Vishwo Sarvajan Sangh' as the first formal organization of Dalit community in 1946 (Early of 2003 B.S.) to fight against untouchability. Vishwo Sarvajan Sangh had published a pamphlet by the name 'Ghosana Abbhyas' (Declaration Practice) to make people aware against untouchability. One day while Bhagat Sarvajeet and his friends were in a meeting on 21 August 1946 (5 Bhadra 2003 B.S.) in Baglung, the Zonal Commissioner of the government arrested them and imprisoned for two months on the request of local Brahmins. They established a primary school in Hiliyapani of Baglung in 1948 (2005 B.S.) giving focus to educate Dalit children. Later it was named as 'Vishwakarma Primary School'. That school got the recognition by the government on 2 April 1953 (20 Chaitra 2009 B.S.). The school has been running in Kalimati of Baglung and is upgraded to a higher secondary school now.

Bhagat Sarvajeet Vishwakarma, Mr. Luxmi Narayan Vishwakarma and Mr. Manbir Vishwakarma went to Kathmandu in 1949 (Jestha 2006 B.S.) and gave a request letter to Prime Minister Mohan Shamsher Rana asking him to make them free from untouchability, to allow them to put on sacred thread (Janahi) and to free from Goljhara cost. Bhagat Sarvajeet discussed with the authority personnel and convinced them that there was no untouchability in religion, so they should be free from that problem and should be allowed to put on the sacred thread. On the recommendation of the officials, the Prime Minister Rana fulfilled their demand at that moment. After getting back to Baglung when they started to exercise the approved rights the local administration arrested Bhagat Sarvajeet Vishwakarma and his friends and sent them to prison on 1 August 1949 (17 Shrawan 2006 B.S.) on the request of local Brahmins and after one week they were transferred to Tansen Jail. The District Commissioner of Palpa Mr. Rudra Shamsher Rana himself went to Tansen jail and asked Bhagat Ji to beg pardon but Bhagat Ji rejected his proposal. Then Commissioner Rana started to beat Bhagat Ji with his iron nailed boots till his teeth were broken. Ultimately, Bhagat Sarvajeet Vishwakarma along with his friends was freed from Tansen jail in January 1951 (Poush of 2007 B.S.) because of the pressure of democratic movement of that time. When Bhagat Ji was freed from jail he was suffering from tuberculosis. Bhagat Ji died in 1955 (2012 B. S.) in Balarampur in India.

**Author keywords:** Historical beginning of Dalit movement, Declaration Practice, Democratic movement.

Submitted April 12, 2025.

## **Abstract # ADir-8/ASys-16**

### ***Title: Anti Caste Activism and EDI in Canadian Higher Education***

**Author:** Kavya Harshitha Jidugu , PhD Student, Faculty of Education, Queen's University. Kingston, Canada. (23gwk@queensu.ca)

#### **Abstract:**

For many, higher education represents a promise of mobility, opportunity, and transformation. Yet, for Dalit students, higher education is not a straightforward path. Although it is viewed as empowering and, has the potential to uplift the marginalized, it is also a site of caste-based exclusions. As an international Dalit doctoral student and anti-caste activist in Canada, I navigate a higher education landscape that simultaneously markets equity, diversity and inclusion, homogenising the South Asian identity while remaining unprepared to acknowledge and address caste oppression which is a bifactor of the diversity. This article, written as an autoethnographic account, weaves together personal narratives with critical literature to examine how caste structures operate within the Canadian higher education institutions in their policies and on campuses and how anti caste activism is offering a critique to these institutionalized inequalities. While privileged caste South Asian students arrive in Canadian higher education with caste capital, social networks, economic security, and institutional familiarity, Dalit students often enter these spaces without such advantages. Moreover, their concerns and epistemologies are erased through the homogenized South Asian identity leading to their exclusion. In Canada, caste discrimination is compounded by racism and patriarchy, creating layered exclusions that shape academic, social, mental and professional experiences of Dalit students. While Canadian universities promote diversity and equity, caste remains largely absent from institutional policies, leaving Dalit students without the recognition or protections afforded to other marginalized communities. Beyond the university, the South Asian diaspora in Canada plays a crucial role in maintaining caste structures through social networks, student organizations, and cultural spaces that uphold Brahminical dominance. Any critique of South Asian experiences in Canadian higher education remains incomplete without addressing Brahminism. Hence, this paper argues that Dalit students and anti-caste activists are offering this critique and contributing to the equity diversity and inclusion in Canadian higher education institutions. Thereby it presents how they are disrupting these silences, pushing for the recognition of caste oppression and advocating for institutional accountability through authors own experiences and from the existing literature. Through anti caste activism and scholarship, Dalit communities are not only asserting their presence but also critically reshaping the discourse on South Asian diaspora, access to higher education, international student mobility and internationalization of higher education policies. By centering Dalit experience and perspective, this paper through anti caste activism as a theoretical ground challenges the dominant narrative of homogenized South Asian identity and calls for an anti-caste approach to equity in higher education.

## **Abstract # ADir-9**

**Title:** Dalit Round Table Conference: A platform for forming unified movement in Nepal

**Author:** Nirmal Kumar Bishwokarma, PhD, Coordinator for National Dalit Round Table Conference and Former Ambassador of Nepal to South Africa, Email: [nirmalkumarbk@gmail.com](mailto:nirmalkumarbk@gmail.com)

### **Abstract:**

Nepal's new constitution 2015 was expected to address and solve the manifold issues of Dalits and other marginalized communities in the country. However, in the period of its implementation it has not been working towards the expectations of Dalits. Based on this paper presenter's personal experience and practice gained during the activism, this paper will present current marginalized situation of Dalits in terms of their representation in the power structure, redistribution of state resources such as land reform, government budget allocations, access to education and health infrastructure, impunity in caste-based torture to Dalits and reform in Hindu religion. The presentation will specially delve into a diverse movement of Dalit political and human right activists to oppose the current exclusionary practice of ruling castes, and their agreement among to organize Dalit Round Table Conference a way forward.

This presentation will discuss in detail on structure and process of the conference, major findings of the conference on review of the Dalit right movement so far in Nepal and its strength and weakness, as well as agreed philosophy, strategy and agenda for further unified Dalit movement in Nepal which provide sustainable solution for Emancipation of Dalit Community from all form of exclusion and marginalization. It will also present major conclusions on typical issues regarding Dalits liberation such as history and identity of Dalits, power structure transfer, state resource redistribution, legal justice to Dalits, inter-Dalit discrimination, Hindu religion reform, and short-medium- and long-term strategies. The conclusion of this paper will contribute to co-create common understanding and networking in some issues of Dalit movement among the participants during the Global Conference for a Caste Free World 2025.

**Key words:** Dalits, exclusion, round table conference, Dalit liberation

## **Abstract # ADir-10**

**Title:** Developing a Relationship Between Critical Caste Studies and Critical Race Theory

**Author:** Rajesh Sampath, Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Justice, Rights, and Social Change

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### **Abstract:**

This presentation will explore the similarities and differences of race and caste in Western historical contexts given the longer-standing oppression of racism with the legacy of Black slavery in the Americas. Inversely, we will explore similarities and differences between caste and an emergent racism in contemporary South Asia, particularly in India. Given that caste is a millennia-old form of inequality and oppression, astutely diagnosed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the emergent racism of twenty-first century postcolonial India based on a Hindu majoritarian nationalist sensibility constructs racialized non-Indus others, which leads to various forms of marginalization, exclusion, and oppression. This new form of racism can be contrasted from white British colonial racist structures as a form of oppression of non-Western colonized subjects, a topic analyzed to its creative depths in the works of Frantz Fanon. In summary, we want to compare a Western context like the U.S. on race and caste with a South Asian context, particularly India, of caste and race in the historical dimensions and current manifestations. We hope this can foster a constructive dialogue between Critical Race Theory here in the West and Critical Caste Studies here and the Global South/East as a global research exchange platform.

**Key words:** Race and caste similarities and differences.

## **Abstract # ADir-11**

### **Title: Addressing Caste and Descent-Based Discrimination: A Global Imperative**

**Author:** Paul Divakar Namala, Convener, Global Forum of Descent Communities, 777, United Nations Plaza suite 10 A, New York, NY 10017.  
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#### **Abstract:**

Descent Communities are socially marginalized groups worldwide who face systemic discrimination based on ancestral occupation and caste hierarchies. These communities — including Dalits in South Asia, Burakumin in Japan, Haratine in Mauritania, Osu in Nigeria, Al-Akhdam in Yemen, and Roma across Europe — though culturally and geographically diverse, share common experiences of exclusion and oppression. Historically relegated to stigmatized and devalued occupations, they continue to endure structural barriers in education, employment, housing, political participation, healthcare, and dignity.

Discrimination based on work and descent is deeply entrenched, passed down through generations, and persists despite international human rights commitments. The challenges faced by Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD) are severe:

- Social Stigma and Segregation: Segregated living, exclusion from public spaces, and daily humiliation limit social mobility and reinforce marginalization.
- Limited Access to Education and Employment: Systemic biases hinder access to quality education and confine individuals to insecure, low-paying work regardless of ability.
- Violence and Discrimination: High rates of violence, hate crimes, and police brutality occur with little legal protection or accountability.
- Political and Legal Exclusion: Underrepresentation in governance and weak enforcement of protective laws impede justice and inclusion.
- Lack of Recognition and Data: Limited recognition and data collection exacerbate invisibility and hinder effective policy responses.

Eliminating caste and descent-based discrimination requires collective global action. Solidarity across borders builds collective power, amplifies voices, and facilitates the exchange of strategies and resources. This movement aligns closely with global objectives, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which prioritize reducing inequality, promoting inclusive societies, and ensuring access to justice.

In conclusion, addressing the rights of Descent Communities is essential to building a just, equitable, and inclusive world. By uniting efforts globally, we affirm the inherent dignity of all individuals and move decisively towards dismantling historic systems of oppression.

## **Abstract # ADir-12**

**Title: Casteism in Nepal and its Diasporic Impact in Canada: Social Work Praxis for Decolonizing Caste-Based Trauma**

**Authors:** Dr. Karun K. Karki, Faculty of Arts, and Dr. Drona P. Rasali, School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada & Emotional Well-Being Institute-Canada

### **Abstract:**

Nepal legally abolished caste-based discrimination in 1962, and its 2015 federal constitution provisioned ending casteism to foster an egalitarian society that ensures economic equity, prosperity, and social justice. Despite these statutory guarantees, the state has failed to take substantial action to dismantle the deeply entrenched caste hierarchies that continue to shape social structures. The state's failure to enforce constitutional safeguards has allowed caste-based inequities to persist, resulting in ongoing socio-economic exclusion and discrimination. Moreover, casteism is not confined to Nepal; it transcends national borders, continuing to shape social hierarchies and perpetuate discrimination within diasporic communities, especially in countries like Canada, where caste-based prejudice is often reinforced by cultural silence and the lack of legal code protections. Reports indicate that casteism persists within South Asian diasporic communities in Canada, yet a significant gap remains in understanding its manifestation, particularly within the Nepali diaspora. The experiences of this group are frequently subsumed under a homogenized "South Asian" framework that fails to consider Nepal's unique history of centuries-old feudal caste hierarchies and the incomplete nature of caste reforms. The absence of empirical research focusing specifically on the Nepali diaspora, and particularly on Dalit communities, means their experiences remain underexplored and their struggles largely invisible. This academic silence reflects a broader systemic erasure of Dalits, both in Nepal and in the diaspora in Canada. Both Nepal and Canada exhibit patterns of inaction regarding casteism. In Canada, caste is not recognized as a protected category under human rights legislation despite the country's professed commitment to human rights, multiculturalism and equity. Similarly, Nepal's failure to transform constitutional promises into tangible reforms and Canada's general apathy against caste issues within its diaspora reveal transnational patterns of state complicity. The legal recognition of caste as a protected category under human rights legislation in Canada, coupled with affirmative action measures in Nepal to combat caste-based discrimination, is crucial but remains insufficiently addressed. This gap constitutes a form of structural oppression against Dalits and other historically oppressed caste groups.

In this paper, we critically explore the intersection of caste-based discrimination in Nepal, its transnational continuation within the Nepali diaspora in Canada, and the role of social workers in addressing and challenging these systemic injustices. We argue that caste-based oppression must be recognized as a transnational issue that persists across borders and is reproduced within diasporic communities. Canada's multicultural framework, while lauded for promoting diversity, paradoxically obscures caste-based discrimination by prioritizing performative diversity over substantive equity. The reluctance to legally recognize caste as a protected category undermines the detrimental implications of caste-based discrimination in Canadian society. Often constrained by Eurocentric models, social workers must move beyond individualistic approaches and adopt decolonized practices that acknowledge and address caste-based trauma. Supporting Dalit-led movements and advocating for legal reforms and policies that specifically target caste discrimination are crucial steps in challenging caste hierarchies both locally and globally. This paper calls for a

comprehensive re-evaluation of existing frameworks and practices to ensure that caste-based oppression is fully acknowledged and addressed.

## **Abstract # ADir-13**

**Title:** Role of higher education in abolishing caste systems

**Authors:** Dr. Uttam Gaule, Professor, Community College Leadership Program, Advanced Studies, Leadership, and Policy: Community College Leadership Development Program, Morgan State University, and President, STAR Scholars Network, Baltimore, MD, USA.

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### **Abstract:**

This paper looks into how higher education is able to dismantle the social caste system prevalent in various cultures. In this regard, higher education clearly acts as an avenue for social mobility by promoting equitable access to education. The essay evaluates the ways in which educational institutions empower the oppressed with professional knowledge as skill by including policies and curriculum going beyond the traditional caste system. A historical analysis alongside contemporary case studies provides insight on the obliteration of discriminatory mindsets and the encouragement towards democratic societal structures facilitated by education. The enabling aspects of education also provide the sustained focus on inclusivity, affirmative action, and representation throughout all levels of higher education as fundamental to obliterating discrimination based on caste. The paper finally recommends active involvement at the community level, policy changes, and advocacy as means to fortify education as a pathway for the abolishment of caste discrimination and to further social justice.

**Key words:** Higher education, Curriculum, Policy change, Abolishment of caste discrimination

**ADir-14- Invited Speaker: “The Global Theory of Dalit” by: Dr. Suraj Yengde, Harvard University. [surajyengde@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:surajyengde@fas.harvard.edu)**

**[Abstract not available]**

**Abstract # ADir-15:****Author:** Siddan Chandra [cgsiddan@sympatico.ca](mailto:cgsiddan@sympatico.ca)**Title: Potlatch, the Legend of Kannappa and Dalit/Queer Joy as Linchpin of a Theory of Personal, Social and Planetary Transformation: Kidocracy****Abstract:**

In this paper, I present kidocracy, a new theory of liberation from all systems of oppression—racism, casteism, capitalism, patriarchy, homophobia, ableism, adult supremacy, planetary extractive ecocide, and others—that erupted from my participation in the Idle No More movement in Canada in 2012. There, I learned from native women and children how both the Canadian state and church facilitated a continent-wide capitalist land grab via (1) the banning of the potlatch (1884–1951) as “wasteful, reckless and unchristian,” and (2) residential schooling and the killing of native children. The potlatch—orgiastic gift-giving festivals marking major life events—was described by Marcel Mauss as an economy of competitive gift giving, where the ultimate goal was to give an *unreturnable gift*, even if it resulted in the giver’s total impoverishment. Georges Bataille further theorized the potlatch as the prototype of an anti-capitalist economy of expenditure, loss, and sacrifice.

Bataille’s vindication of Vincent van Gogh’s gift of his ear as an unreturnable gift helps me understand the legend of Kannappa, a Chenchu Adivasi saint who offers his eye to heal the bleeding eye of Shiva—a pre-Vedic earth god—as embodying the potlatch. Parsing this legend as expressed in 12th and 16th-century poetry and a 1954 film through five questions posed by Prof. Sudharshan Durayappah, I underscore the subversive indigenization and toppling of Brahminical purity through Kannappa’s transgressive gifts of meat and acts of love. I further highlight Bataille’s concept of base materialism as a countermeasure to fascism.

I formulate Kannappa’s sacrifice as Queer Joy by contextualizing it in the framework of ecosexuality (or sexecology), a contemporary base materialist environmental movement led by Queer activist couple Elizabeth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle, who “married” a mountain to protect it from mountaintop removal. They promote viewing the Earth as lover, to be cared for, rather than mother, to be extracted from.

Returning to another lesson from Idle No More—where I, as a survivor of and refugee from adult supremacy, casteist fascism, and patriarchal heteronormativity (explored in my auto-ethnographic film Remembrance of Things Present, 2007), observed that native children were both minors and minorities—and coined the term kidocracy in my Kidocratic Manifesto (2013). It calls for the rule of minors and minorities to dismantle both adult supremacy and fascism/casteism simultaneously.

Braced by movements like BLM, Arab Spring, Occupy, Fridays For Future, the Rohith Vemula protests, and informed by Sundar John Boopalan’s Dalit liberation theology, I trace kidocracy’s development into a theory of personal, social, and planetary transformation. What feminism does for gender difference, kidocracy does for the status of being minor/minority, seeing women - as did the Dalit Panthers - as minorities, not in numbers but in power, as members of the oppressed 99%.

Boopalan’s three steps—memory, grief, and agency—are expanded here by stacking Dalit Joy (as seen in Bama’s Karukku) with potlatch and Queer Joy to mark a fourth point. Together, they form an antifascist theory of social transformation: Kidocracy as a portal to a kind and liberatory world.

**Key words:** Kidocracy, Potlatch, Dalit Joy, Minoritarianism, Base Materialism

**Abstract #: ADir-16****Title: Untouchability problem and solution**

**Author:** Gajadhar Sunar, Dalit Human Rights activist, Former President Dalit NGO Federation and Dalit Welfare Organization, Country Representative of ICDR and IAFSJ, Nepal. gdsunar70@gmail.com

**Abstract:**

In Nepal, Dalit community are facing the untouchability problem. Dalit communities are not enjoying their human rights. It is a violation of human rights and against the national and international laws. The constitution of Nepal 2015 has made the caste-based discrimination and untouchability as a punishable crime. Still, there are discriminations in practice going on and all the Dalit communities are facing the untouchability problem. This paper will address why this problem exists in the society, what its root cause is, how we can solve the problem, who our main stakeholders are and what their role is for elimination of untouchability problem.

What kinds of strategy are needed for elimination of the untouchability problem? We have to know our key stakeholders and their role out of different stakeholders to end the untouchability problem. We have to know about an appropriate strategy to mobilize all the national and international organizations and individuals for elimination of untouchability problem. It is crucial to ascertain how everyone contributes to the elimination of untouchability and how political parties and governments can contribute to achieve the tangible results. This working paper will provide some realistic and appropriate action points for elimination of untouchability problem. It will help to increase the bargaining power of Dalit community and increase the access of Dalit community in government mechanisms and resources. This paper will contribute and help to understand the concept, present situation of Dalit community, role of non-Dalit, religious leader, root cause of untouchable problem and way of solution. It is good opportunity to me to share my grass root level to international level's long experience working with various stakeholder on Dalit issue in Global Conference for Caste Free World, 2025 in Canada.

## **Abstract #: ADir-17**

**Title: Annihilation of Caste in Canada: Chetna Association of Canada - its role in supporting the anti-caste movement (2025)**

**Author:** Jai Birdi, Chetna Association of Canada, Vancouver, BC, Canada.  
[jpbirdi@gmail.com](mailto:jpbirdi@gmail.com).

### **Abstract:**

#### ***Introduction:***

The Chetna Association of Canada is a non-profit community association. Its mandate is to lead and support initiatives that achieve inclusion and respect through the elimination of caste discrimination by hosting and supporting public and policy engagement, cultural programming, and the arts. Chetna was established in BC as a non-profit organisation in 1999. Membership for Chetna is open to anyone who believes in and practices the values of Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar.

#### ***Activities in April 2025:***

The month of April was a busy month, full of activities across the globe celebrating the life and contributions of Baba Sahib Dr. Ambedkar and the contributions of everyone who has worked tirelessly and selflessly to create a more equitable and level playing field for marginalized communities to achieve self-advancement and collective development.

The rising star and founder of the Bheem Army and Member of Parliament (Nagina, India) Chandrashekhar Azad, toured across the United States and discussed his vision and ideas for accomplishing political emancipation. On April 14, Azad participated in the Dr. Ambedkar Jayanti (birth) Celebration in Seattle, an event that was also attended by members of Chetna, AISRO Canada, other organizations from Canada.

To commemorate Dalit History Month, two plays were staged for the students and faculty of a secondary school in Surrey. The plays were written, directed, and performed by Simran Kranti, and sponsored by Chetna. One play was on the historical icon, the revolutionary Savitribai Phule, and the other play was on women's empowerment.

The Province of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver, and City of Surrey signed proclamations proclaiming April 14, 2025 as Dr. Ambedkar Equality Day. In addition, the Province of British Columbia also proclaimed April as Dalit History Month. Surrey's Mayor, Brenda Locke, presented the proclamation to members of the Chetna and other community representatives at a special celebration hosted at the Surrey Center Library on April 15.

Professor Vivek Kumar of Jawaharlal Nehru University was invited to deliver his lectures in Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary. The tour was initiated to observe Dr. Ambedkar Jayanti (birthday), Equality Day, and Dalit History Month. Kumar highlighted Dr. Ambedkar's contributions as a nation builder, architect of the Indian Constitution, and an emerging global icon. Kumar inaugurated the launch of Chetna's newest initiative, the Consortium for the Annihilation of Caste Discrimination in Canada and Beyond.

## **Abstract #: ADir-18**

### **Title: Caste Discrimination and Untouchability in Nepal: Intergenerational Perceptions and Analysis.**

**Author:** Gopal Nepali (Badi), Senior Researcher, Samata Foundation,  
gnepali5@gmail.com, gopal.nepali@samatafoundation.org

#### **Abstract:**

Nepal underwent major political changes in 1950, 1962, and 1990. Radical change occurred particularly after the decade-long Maoist insurgency in 1995-2005. Nepal was declared a nation free from caste-based discrimination and untouchability in the year 2006. Many forces are contributing to societal changes in Nepal. The process of social change may be imperceptible and cumulative, i.e., one may not easily perceive the processes of social change, although it is always taking place. There has been a substantial development in the education system, more advancement of technology, growing urbanisation, and the effects of global trends, etc. Subsequently, much more is expected for the human rights of marginalised people, fair distribution of power and national resources. But due to the strong existing structural setup and cultural values built for thousands of years, backed by strong "SANATAN" Dharma, any form of new dynamics gets dissolved into the status quo, causing sluggish change seemingly undeterred manner.

This study applied a qualitative method. The study focused on the intersectionality of gender, geography, and diversity of the respondents. It employed a cross-sectional approach to study the lived experience of Dalits over the last 70 years. Inter-generational experiences of Dalits falling under the Baby Boomer, Generation X, and millennial generations are interviewed. The sampling method for the survey questionnaire was non-probability sampling, under which the convenience sampling method was employed.

Factors determining the social changes, factors impeding the social changes, and the state of new equilibrium in the society have been analysed through the lenses of the caste system and the practice of discrimination. The older generations were under a higher degree of oppression. The middle-aged Dalits were less suppressed and given access to education and other opportunities. Dalits from the younger generation are not explicitly discriminated against. Many of the youngsters from the millennial category have not experienced extreme forms of discrimination today.

There have been some changes in society regarding caste-based discrimination and the practice of untouchability. But the progress has not been as desired by Dalits. The discrimination is not as blatant as in previous years, but continues implicitly. The traditional cultural values are quite stubborn. Evolutionary changes are more effective than abrupt changes. The impending forces need to be tackled jointly by Dalits and non-Dalits. More needs to be done in the academic field, as changes brought by education are sustainable and maintain social harmony.

**Keywords:** Caste-based discrimination, untouchability, social change, radical change, evolutionary change.

**Abstract #: ADir-19**

**Title:** "The Voices of the Strings: Empowering the Marginalized Gandharba Youth for a Caste-Free Future"

**Author:** Pujan Gandharba, Nepal

**Abstract:**

The Gandharba community of Nepal, traditionally known for their mastery of the sarangi instrument, singing and oral storytelling, stands at the crossroads of cultural pride and systemic marginalization. Despite their deep contributions to Nepali cultural identity, Gandharba people continue to face the entrenched impacts of caste-based discrimination. This presentation sheds light on the dual struggle of preserving, promoting and safeguarding indigenous musical heritage while striving for dignity, equity, and social justice in a caste-bound society. As a youth leader of the Gandharba community, I will share lived experiences, grassroots mobilization efforts, and cultural activism as tools for resistance and empowerment. The narrative calls for the global recognition of the caste system as a human rights issue and highlights the urgent need for inclusive policies that amplify the voices of marginalized communities. A caste-free world is possible not through the erasure of identity, but through the celebration of cultural diversity and equal opportunity.

**Keywords:** Gandharba Community of Nepal, Sarangi string music, Indigenous musical heritage, Oral storytelling, Systemic marginalization, Cultural identity.

## **Abstract #: ADir-20**

**Title:** Introduction to Ambedkar International Social Reform Organization (AISRO) Canada

**Author:** Rashpal Singh Bhardwaj, president of Ambedkar International Social Reform Organization (AISRO) Canada, registered at [aisrocanada@gmail.com](mailto:aisrocanada@gmail.com).

### **Abstract:**

The Ambedkar International Social Reform Organization (AISRO) Canada is a non-profit Organization established in 2016. A decade ago, there were so many Dalit atrocities that happened in India, and we organized the society to protest in Vancouver, BC. Our Vancouver-based organization denied sending a memorandum to the High Commissioner of the Indian government and observed that Baba Sahib Bhim Rao Ambedkar's mission was limitless, as they taught us to educate, unite, and agitate. Baba Sahib Thought's co-mind persons observed that we should establish an organization that can work on Social reform work without fear of the Indian Authority to protect Dalits' rights, that is, the "Ambedkar International Social Reform Organization (AISRO) Canada", and we do work against discrimination based on caste, colour, creed, and gender worldwide. In the context of Baba Sahib Mission AISRO Canada, the Members organized the Death Anniversary in the Canadian Parliament House under the administration of Honourable Randeep Sarai, Surrey Centre Member of Parliament, on December 06, 2016. AISRO objects to help: Canadian First Nation Issues, Mrs. Kshama Sawant, Seattle City councillor, brought the bill to the Seattle Municipality to stop caste-based discrimination, which had passed with a majority of votes, AISRO, stand against Khalistani people to halt the protest of burning the Constitution and Indian flag in front of Indian High Commissioner Vancouver, Canada, provided financial support to victims of family members, who died in an SC & ST act violation by the Indian Government agitation on April 02, 2018. AISRO Canada Members aim for Community unification and ask all Ambedkarite associations, and Political Parties that belong to the Bahujans "why not all Bahujan leaders come under one umbrella for Bahujan rule in India"? AISRO Canada Members believe in unity among our Bahujan people and in eliminating the caste movement worldwide. We contribute to our concentration on organizing with solidarity at the Global Conference for a Caste-Free World.

## EASYCHAIR SYSTEM ONLINE PLATFORM SUBMISSIONS

**Abstract #:** ADir-21 (Pre-Recorded Video Presentation)

**Title:** *Nepal's Dalits in Transition: A Briefing on a Book and Related Research Projects in Nepal*

**Authors:** Professors David Gellner and Dr. Krishna Adikari, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, Oxford University, UK.

**Abstract:**

This briefing, led by Professor David Gellner and Dr. Krishna Adikari, introduces their new edited volume *Nepal's Dalits in Transition*, a comprehensive exploration of the ongoing socio-cultural, economic, and political transformations affecting Dalit communities in Nepal. Originating as a special issue of *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, the book consolidates additional commissioned essays to offer a multidimensional perspective on Dalit experiences and the structural inequalities they continue to face, despite progressive legal and societal changes.

The authors recount a 12-year collaboration encompassing three major research projects. The first, *Caste, Class, and Culture*, examined the interplay between caste-based identities, cultural capital, and systemic inequality. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of distinction, the research explored how cultural tastes and practices reinforce historical marginalization. Their second project analyzed the role of Nepal's high school curricula in addressing caste-based discrimination, piloting alternative lessons to assess their impact. The third project expanded the geographic scope to study regional variations in Dalit identity formation and mobilization, exploring how national campaigns interact with local experiences of dignity and resistance.

The research employed mixed methods including surveys, ethnography, and collaboration with local and international academic institutions. Findings highlighted a dual narrative: while caste boundaries blur during labor migration—especially abroad—they often re-emerge upon return, indicating deep-rooted cultural persistence. A key concept introduced is “negative cultural capital,” which describes how essentialized, stigmatizing stereotypes of Dalits continue to shape lived experiences.

The book concludes with five “ideal type” trajectories for Dalit futures—Assimilation, Reparation, Ethnicization, Revolution, and Exit—summarized by the acronym A-R-E-R-E. These represent possible pathways for identity negotiation and societal integration, acknowledging both structural barriers and opportunities for transformation. The authors emphasize ongoing dialogue and policy relevance, aiming to inform inclusive development strategies and cultural shifts within Nepalese society.

## **Abstract #: ADir-22 (Pre-Recorded Video Presentation)**

**Title:** Reflective talk on enduring issue of caste-based discrimination in Nepal

**Authors:** Simone Galimberti, Development Practitioner, Trainer and Facilitator and Opinion Writer in Kathmandu, Nepal

### **Abstract:**

In this reflective talk delivered by Simone Galimberti from Kathmandu addresses the enduring issue of caste-based discrimination in Nepal, particularly focusing on the Dalit community. While acknowledging his position as a non-Dalit and foreign observer, Galimberti shares insights shaped by his interest in social justice and ongoing dialogue with community advocates like Dr. Drona Rasali and Dr. Man Bahadur BK. He poses a central question: *How can Dalit individuals thrive in a society where a level playing field remains elusive?*

Galimberti emphasizes the need for broader understanding and advocacy of affirmative action policies and legal instruments designed to counter caste discrimination. He notes the prevalent misunderstanding and resistance to such tools among dominant caste groups, stressing the urgency of public discourse that clarifies their purpose and impact.

Beyond legal frameworks, Galimberti highlights the importance of cultivating leadership within the Dalit community. He redefines leadership not merely as charisma or strategic skill, but as a deeper commitment to accountability—toward self, teams, and society at large. He encourages young Dalit individuals to build expertise beyond social justice, in fields such as climate change, ethical AI, and more, thus expanding their influence and visibility across sectors.

A critical component of his message is the need for unity and inter-caste solidarity. He advocates for forging alliances with members of dominant castes to build mutual understanding and support for structural change. Furthermore, he proposes the creation of an inclusive, non-political platform or forum for Dalits to share strategies, best practices, and ideas in a sustainable, citizen-driven format.

Concluding with a call for collective action, Galimberti underscores that achieving structural change requires both internal cohesion within the Dalit community and broader societal engagement to advance the cause of caste equity and justice.

## **Abstract # ASys-1**

### **Title: Ethical Considerations in Community Engagement: A Holistic Framework for Sustainable Development**

**Authors:** Derrick Mirindi ([demir1@morgan.edu](mailto:demir1@morgan.edu)), United States, Morgan State University; Frederic Mirindi ([mirindif@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:mirindif@myumanitoba.ca)), Canada, University of Manitoba; Modestine Mirindi ([mirindimodestine@gmail.com](mailto:mirindimodestine@gmail.com)), Rwanda, University of Kigali.

#### **Abstract:**

This innovative study presents a comprehensive framework for addressing ethical considerations in community engagement initiatives, with a particular focus on sustainable development projects. The research synthesizes insights from diverse fields including anthropology, sociology, public health, and environmental science to create a multidimensional approach to ethical community engagement.

The study introduces the concept of "Ethical Engagement Equilibrium" (EEE), which posits that successful community engagement relies on balancing four key ethical pillars: Respect for Autonomy, Distributive Justice, Beneficence, and Non-Maleficence. These pillars are examined through the lens of both individual and collective community rights, addressing a critical gap in current ethical frameworks.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative surveys with qualitative ethnographic observations across 15 diverse communities in both urban and rural settings in Maryland in the United States. The study reveals that the EEE framework significantly enhances project outcomes, community satisfaction, and long-term sustainability of initiatives.

Key findings include:

- The identification of "ethical tipping points" where community engagement transitions from beneficial to potentially harmful.
- The development of a novel "Ethical Engagement Index" (EEI) that quantifies the ethical robustness of community engagement strategies.
- The discovery of culturally-specific ethical considerations that challenge universal ethical principles in community engagement.

The study concludes by proposing a dynamic model for ethical community engagement that adapts to changing socio-cultural contexts. This model offers practical guidelines for policymakers, NGOs, and community leaders to navigate complex ethical landscapes in community engagement initiatives. This research not only advances theoretical understanding of ethics in community engagement but also provides actionable insights for enhancing the ethical integrity and effectiveness of community-based projects worldwide.

**Author keywords:** Community engagement, ethical considerations, Ethical Engagement Equilibrium

## **Abstract # ASys-2**

**Title:** Sikh Hermeneutics of Jati and the Egalitarian Vision of Begumpura

**Author:** Shamsher Singh ([shamshergns.rsh@gndu.ac.in](mailto:shamshergns.rsh@gndu.ac.in)), India, Research scholar

### **Abstract:**

'Jati' is a Social-ethnic issue that is deeply embedded in the Indian societal Structure. Jati, as a Term, we took into the Nyaya Philosophy where it was defined as sophistical refutation. Subsequently, its conceptualization evolved, where a universal or generic property defines a group or class of entities. It signifies the inherent and eternal(universal) essence that allows us to group similar objects or beings under a common classification. Later Smriti's appropriated this 'Thesis' as a Social Structure. They interpreted it as a reflection of human social-psychological emphasizing hierarchy-based social categorization. They developed Hermeneutics(grounded in their spiritual authentication derived from the Purusha Sukta) to reinterpret the anthropology of India. In this framework, Brahmins were positioned as superior, while Dalits were portrayed as lacking basic human values.

Sikhism, as a philosophy Framework, believes in the Absolute one form. The basis for a practice is that all humans are considered equal, transcending caste (मानस जाति). Philosophical derivation from Bhakti Tradition, Sikhism critiques existing paradigms and introduces an original antithesis encapsulated in the concepts of 'Atherban Practice(अर्थवर्ण रीति) and Bipar Sanskar (बिपर संस्कार). Bipar refers to the collective, unified subconsciousness of dominant groups, such as Brahmins. Atherban Practice examines how this Subconscious Creates a sacred linguistic framework that serves its interests -a language that constructs archetypes, myths, symbols, and mythology aligned with those interests. A philosophy based on This Subconsciousness builds Varna (concentric plural society) in practice and vedanta Shastra(in philosophy) as such Hegelian idealism. Both classic Structure Serves slavers and builds Homogeneous Categories(भेद) based on sumnum genus.

My research employs a qualitative methodology, based on the question of whether a communitarian society can co-exist, as envisioned in the concept of Begumpura (बेगमपुरा) by Ravidas Ji. Using philosophical hermeneutics, comparative analysis, and critical social theory, this research examines:

The socio-psychological construction of caste in Nyaya and Smriti traditions.

Sikhism's critique of hierarchical paradigms through its emphasis on equality.

The relevance of Begumpura's vision in addressing contemporary caste-based challenges.

**Author keywords:** Jati, Sikhism, Begumpura, Dalit

Submitted Jan 22, 07:01

## **Abstract # ASys-3**

**Title:** Status of Dalit Human Rights in Nepal: Assessing the Legal Framework and Law Enforcement Response to Caste-Based Discrimination.

**Author:** Tirupati Pariyar, Samata Foundation, Nepal <http://samatafoundation.org>.  
[tirupati.pariyar@samatafoundation.org](mailto:tirupati.pariyar@samatafoundation.org),

### **Abstract:**

The Nepali society and its mechanisms are fundamentally rooted to the Hindu Varna system. In its contemporary social construct despite coming off age amidst the liberalization and growing technological advancement, Dalit community, comprising more than 13.6% of Nepal's population, continue to experience caste indignities in their everyday lives. They are exposed to insecurity, verbal, and physical assault even to the extent of risk to their lives due to caste discrimination. Dalit community has witnessed murder and group lynching of young Dalits like Nawaraj B.K. and Ajit Mijar among many, compelling their families to live in the aftermath of the horrific incidences, with the corps of the latter one waiting inside the frozen cube in the morgue house of Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, Maharajgung, for the justice to be delivered.

This paper dissects the constitutional and legal frameworks pertaining to Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (CBDU) and assesses the effectiveness of these polices, and the efficiency and responsiveness of the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) generating policy recommendations for the law makers, activists and scholars calling for collective and urgent actions. The secondary data source, the Dalit Human Rights Book created from Media Monitoring of Samata foundation, National Dalit Commission, Nepal Police Administration, INSEC and National Human Rights Commission for last 4 years show insignificantly decreasing trend of Dalit Human Rights (DHR) violations, while, the emergence of newer forms of the incidents indicates that the discrimination diversifies with the changing contexts. Key Informant Interviews conducted with right activists revealed that the low rate of case registrations evidently highlights political influence over police authority and the reluctance of the same for enforcement in the cases of CBDU, and the minimal rate of justice delivery to the victims. Similarly, case studies of the victims and their families illustrate grave risk and threat to life induced by the inefficiency and irresponsiveness of the LEAs leading to hostility to the victims.

The paper concludes that the amendment of the Caste-Based and Other Social Untouchability and Discrimination (Offense and Punishment) Act 2011, revising sentence and penalties to more than 3 years for offenders and shifting the burden of proof to the accused is imperative in ensuring justice for victims of caste-based discrimination. Orientation and rollout of the CBDU case management-legal aid and support service, through construction of provincial and local level Dalit Rights Codes and Dalit empowerment bills respectively would serve a strong backbone for the victims in the journey of justice. Similarly, the moral and legal education of the non-Dalits plays a key role in reducing the CBDU incidents. The evidence from this study can provide the rights activists and the leaders of Dalit sister wings of various political parties the tools to strengthen their agency in advocating for the DHR from both parliament and grassroots movements.

**Author keywords:** Dalit Human Rights, CBDU policies, Caste discrimination, Untouchability, Justice

## **Abstract # ASys-4**

**Title:** Conceptual Framework of the Unified Oppressed Caste Front in Nepal

**Authors:** Ram Tamata (*tamataram26@gmail.com*), Nepal, Unified Oppressed Caste Front (संयुक्त उद्पीडित जातीय मोर्चा); Dick Bahadur Bishwakarma (*nepaldalitinfo@yahoo.com*), Nepal, Unified Oppressed Caste Front (संयुक्त उद्पीडित जातीय मोर्चा)

### **Abstract:**

Since the existing structure of the state is based on the traditional Hindu feudal varna system in Nepal's geographical and social diversity, the practice of caste discrimination and untouchability for centuries has not only divided the Nepali society but has also been a hindrance in the journey of peace, prosperity and development. Although the political and social movements at different times have been successful in bringing about some changes in the nature of the political system, they have not played much role in changing the basic structure and culture of the caste system. In order to uproot the structural and cultural character that has been badly rooted in the caste system for centuries, the political concept and organizational functioning of the United Oppressed Caste Front has been organized with the goal of bringing political, economic and social transformation to change the social structure and culture of the caste system by organizing the oppressed ethnic liberation movement on the basis of humanistic scientific thinking, not trapped in the circle of separate ethnic narrowness.

The Unified Oppressed Caste Front (संयुक्त उद्पीडित जातीय मोर्चा) is a collective entity founded on the basis of identity, co-existence and community socialism. It works for awareness, organization, and socio-political transformation for uplifting oppressed caste people in Nepalese society. In this initiative, the fundamental aspects include social, economic, and ideological revolution. The foundation of this movement is built upon the transformation of society and governance, where social justice and equality prevail. The objective of this movement are: 1) to achieve political, economic, and social transformation through comprehensive efforts, 2) to ensure active participation in governance and nation-building, 3) to establish an egalitarian and inclusive society through collective struggle.

The pillars of transformation are as follows: 1) Political Change: Advocating for a just and inclusive political system; 2) Social Justice: Addressing discrimination and ensuring social security; 3) Economic Growth: Promoting self-sufficiency and sustainable development; 4) International Relations: Strengthening Nepal's global presence through diplomatic and economic ties; 5) Federal Structure & Decentralization: Empowering local governance for effective decision-making; 6) Cultural and Social Change: Recognizing diversity and fostering harmony.

In conclusion, this framework aims to create a transformative and progressive society where social justice, equality, and sustainability prevail as fundamental principles. Through collective efforts, strategic planning, and grassroots engagement, the front envisions a future of social and political harmony in Nepal.

**Author keywords:** State structure, Caste discrimination and untouchability, Political transformation, Social justice and equality, Social and political harmony

## **Abstract # ASys-5**

**Title:** Caste, Migration and Canadian Dalits: An ethnographic study

**Authors:** Seema Mahi ([seema.mahi@ubc.ca](mailto:seema.mahi@ubc.ca)), India, University of British Columbia

### **Abstract:**

The proposed paper aims to present a study that examines how human migration impacts the phenomenon of Caste. It captures the lived reality, plight and assertion of Dalits in the diaspora. To analyze the social and psychological implications of caste and migration, the study builds upon the personal and social encounters of caste experienced by South Asian Dalits in Canada. It highlights the impact and social stigma of caste discrimination on marginalized migrant groups social. As a response to caste discrimination, a Dalit social movement has emerged in Canada. It is focused on Dalit activism and social mobilization of Ad dharmis, Ravidassis and Ambedkarites. Based on personal interviews and focus group discussions in Toronto and Vancouver, the proposed paper examines how Canadian Dalits strive for inclusivity, emancipation and a caste free society.

**Author keywords:** Caste, Migration, Diaspora, Social movement, Social equality,

## **Abstract # ASys-6**

**Title:** Caste in Canada: Oral History Methodology and the lived experience of caste

**Author:** Anne Murphy ([anne.murphy@ubc.ca](mailto:anne.murphy@ubc.ca)), Canada, University of British Columbia, <https://history.ubc.ca/profile/anne-murphy/>

### **Abstract:**

The “Caste in Canada project – led by myself (of the UBC Department of History) and Dr. Suraj Yengde of Harvard University/the University of Oxford, in collaboration with the Chetna Association of Canada –was inaugurated to document Dalit individual and community histories and experiences within Canada’s past and present. It is an “oral history” project, designed to investigate and document the histories of us: the people who make history every day, in all different ways, in our communities, our province, and in our nation. This is one of the special features of oral history as a field, and a practice: the drive to document, and also to listen. There are few places in our world today where the art of listening is so practiced: that is what Oral History is, in its essence. Oral history gives us the opportunity not to listen to the stories only of the powerful, and the dominant – who are generally well represented in the historical record – but instead those who have all too often been left out of that story: people from marginalized communities, women, etc. That is why we undertook this method to understand Dalit history and experience in Canada: to understand the people who have made Dalit history in this country, and who have contributed so much to Canada as a whole.

**Author keywords:** Oral history, caste in Canada, interviews

## **Abstract # ASys-7**

**Title:** In the Shadow: Subject Positions in the Limiting Order of Caste

**Authors:** Soma Mandal ([somamandal@iitd.ac.in](mailto:somamandal@iitd.ac.in)) India, INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=7SDY5-4AAAAJ&hl=en>

### **Abstract:**

"Caste has a divine basis. You must, therefore, destroy the sacredness and divinity with which caste has become invested....you must destroy the authority of the Shastras and the Vedas."

- B. R. Ambedkar, Annihilation of Caste, (69)

In my paper, I take the perspective of the shadow as the discursive entry point for illuminating the question of the subject. As Ambedkar (1936) mentioned, during Peshwa's rule, untouchables were not allowed to occupy concrete human form during the day in the presence of upper-caste people. Only during early morning, at noon and dusk, was the long shadow of the Dalit allowed passage as untouchable. Dalits' discursive otherness is thus in the inhabitation of this shadow. The question of the Dalit subject has been rather vexing, being a central subject in several works of Dalit literature. Who (author-subject) can write Dalit literature (subject)? The field of Dalit literature is, therefore, suffused with questions of subject, subjectivity, experience, authorship, authority, anxiety, and acknowledgment of history's other. I take three thinkers, Ambedkar, Foucault, and Balibar, who have advanced the conception of the "subject." For example, Balibar (2003) traces the term to the word's Latin etymology to "subjectum" or "substratum," a neutral term. Balibar categorizes subjectum as belonging to the logico-grammatical tradition while, on the other hand, "We have the masculine term "subjectus," which is to be understood as equivalent to the medieval "subditus" (subordinate)," and this belongs to the meaning of political, juristic, and the theological. I thus situate these three thinkers in examining the possibilities of subject construction, analyzing the term's usage, significance, and construction in Dalit literary works and anti-caste theory.

**Author keywords:** Dalit literature, subject, Ambedkar, caste, shadow, history

Submitted Mar 25, 03:24

## **Abstract # ASys-8**

**Title:** From Classroom to Capitol: Grassroots Organizing for Caste Equity in Social Work Education and California Policy through SB 403

**Author:** Prem Pariyar ([prem@equalitylabs.org](mailto:prem@equalitylabs.org)), United States, University of San Francisco / Equality Labs

### **Abstract:**

This presentation explores the transformative journey of grassroots organizing that began in a social work classroom at CSU East Bay and expanded into a statewide campaign culminating in the passage of California Senate Bill 403 (SB 403), which recognizes caste as a protected category. Grounded in lived experiences of caste-oppressed students and allies within the California State University (CSU) system, this presentation traces how academic spaces can become incubators for critical consciousness, resistance, and policy innovation.

This examine how students, faculty, and community organizations mobilized to challenge caste-blind structures within higher education, building a movement that reshaped institutional policies and contributed to statewide legislative change. Emphasis will be placed on the CSU-wide campaign to include caste in anti-discrimination policies, the political education and coalition-building that empowered this effort, and the intersections of caste, race, immigration, and labor within this broader justice framework.

The presentation highlights lessons in navigating institutional resistance, building solidarity across communities, and translating lived oppression into legislative language. By connecting grassroots organizing in social work departments to tangible policy outcomes like SB 403, this session underscores the power of education-driven activism in the fight for caste equity and social justice.

**Author keywords:** Caste Equity, Discrimination, Anti-discrimination Policy, Grassroot organizing, Coalition-building

## **Abstract # ASys-9**

### ***Title: Determinants, Mediating Factors, and Systemic Impacts of Structural Racism/Casteism across Populations in South Asian and Western Countries***

Dr. Drona Prakash Rasali

Sahayatra International Alliance for Social Justice, Canada

Emotional Well-Being Institute-Canada

([drona.rasali@ewbi-canada.org](mailto:drona.rasali@ewbi-canada.org))

#### **Abstract**

**Background:** Structural casteism in South Asia (e.g. Nepal and India) and structural racism in western countries are deeply entrenched within societal frameworks, perpetuating inequities that extend across economic, socio-political, educational, health and well-being, and institutional domains. A critical but often overlooked consequence of these systemic disparities is health outcomes (Low Birthweight, mental health stigma experienced by marginalized caste groups, which further reinforces their exclusion and vulnerability).

**Objective:** This presentation aims to describe the characteristics, determinants, and mediating factors of structural casteism that contribute to the perpetuation of mental health stigma within Nepal's caste-driven society.

**Methods:** Adapting the idea from my previous study on structural racism (Rasali et al., 2025), macro-level societal information was collected from diverse sources, including Nepal's Social Inclusion Survey 2018, peer-reviewed scientific literature, and general media reports. These data were integrated to synthesize a pictorial model that visually represents the systemic and interdependent nature of caste-based discrimination.

**Findings:** The model illustrates how caste-based inequities in income, education, employment, and land ownership are compounded by institutional discrimination, lack of political representation, and deeply rooted cultural beliefs. These structural barriers manifest at the community level through exclusionary practices, hate crimes, and denial of access to economic and public spaces, which collectively contribute to chronic stress and allostatic load over the life course. This prolonged exposure to adversity exacerbates mental health vulnerabilities leading to setback in emotional well-being, yet caste-related stigma prevents affected individuals from seeking care, reinforcing cycles of social and economic marginalization. Despite constitutional rights and legal provisions against caste-based discrimination, systemic barriers persist, limiting the effectiveness of existing policies.

**Conclusion:** Addressing structural casteism requires targeted reparative policy interventions that go beyond legal provisions to dismantle systemic inequities. Integrating inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, and culturally sensitive mental health initiatives is crucial to mitigating the long-term psychosocial impacts of casteism and fostering a more inclusive society.

**Author keywords:** structural racism/casteism, determinants, mediating factors, health disparities, mental health stigma, emotional well-being setback.

## **Abstract # ASys-10**

**Title:** Establishing Academic Institution for Native Skill, Arts and Culture in Nepal

**Author:** Man Bishwakarma, Native Arts and Heritage Academy Nepal  
[manbdr.bk123@gmail.com](mailto:manbdr.bk123@gmail.com)

### **Abstract:**

Nepal is a country of diversity with Dalits, indigenous people and aboriginal communities who have their own cultures, knowledge, skills and occupations. In fact, around the world, these are the drivers of human civilizations over ages, inventing weapons, agricultural equipment, clothing, housing, health healing and even the community-ruling mechanisms. Certain occupations have specific ritual, ceremonial or spiritual dimensions or functions. There is a deep divergence in trends around the world, while it is clear that a majority of native artifacts and culture have been in decline.

Whatever inventions are coming up in the modern-era, they are originally based on those native knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, throughout the passage of advancing civilizations, they remained as the working class and deprived of socio-economic advantage due to the systemic barriers. The modernizations especially the open market system through globalization captured and distorted such native skills, knowledge and culture for the benefit of few.

Nepal's basic as well as higher education started with the imported knowledge. Even today, there is no such single academic institution focusing on native knowledge, skills, culture and overall heritage in Nepal. The 2021 Census revealed 142 castes and ethnicities. The indigenous people (59 groups) are estimated to account for approximately 36 percent of the country's total population with some 250 native occupations. Likewise, out of nearly 14 percent of the population of Dalits, around 42 percent are still engaged in their 32 traditional occupations. However, such heritages have been shadowed with the modernization of the society.

With this background a community-based academic institution felt needed to generate and redistribute emancipatory knowledge based on the 'critical ethno-caste theory' that can transform the world into an egalitarian green society, explore history and create knowledge on native artifacts, culture and national heritage, reimagine the identity of native communities in an egalitarian social status; and preserve, promote and commercialize their native knowledge, skills, arts, culture and heritage for the country's prosperity. For this purpose, Native Arts and Heritage Academy Nepal has been incorporated in August 10, 2022, probably the first for the heritage education in Nepal. Since its inception it has been running some heritage learning dialogues in collaboration with UNESCO and some concerned academic institutions. It has been also campaigning for a special university for Native Arts and culture in Nepal as provisioned in the national education policy 2025.

As a result of the campaigning Nepal Government formed a five-member-committee to study the feasibility on April 3, 2023. The committee worked hard and submitted the report on 12 June 2023 recommending a committee for preparatory work to establish such university as per the policy and need of the country. On July 10, 2023, a ten-member preparatory committee has been formed by the Nepal Government to precede its preparatory work. The committee had several meetings and introduced an inception report with some recommendations. However, due to the lack of budget

allocation from the ministry, it has been stuck to move ahead from the government side. Nevertheless, the academy is carrying its work regularly.

**Author keywords:** *Native Science, Ancestral Occupations, Community University*

**Submitted:** Mar 30, 15:55

## **Abstract # ASys-11**

**Title:** Unveiling Caste-Based Health Inequities to Advancing Equity and Inclusion in South Asian Health Research in Canada: The Research Protocol

**Authors:**

Ananya Banerjee, McGill University, Canada [ananya.banerjee@mcgill.ca](mailto:ananya.banerjee@mcgill.ca);

Anita Lal, Moving Forward Family Services, Canada [contact@anitalal.com](mailto:contact@anitalal.com)

**Abstract:**

Caste plays a critical yet often overlooked role in understanding health inequities among South Asian communities in Canada, as it intersects with other identities such as gender, class, and immigration status to shape experiences of discrimination and marginalization. Despite its significance, caste remains largely unacknowledged in health research, risking the exacerbation of health disparities among caste-oppressed communities. In South Asian countries, caste-based hierarchies affect access to resources, opportunities, and social networks—inequities that persist even post-migration. An intersectional lens reveals how caste-based stigma and exclusion continue to impact mental health, healthcare access, and social integration within Canadian society. By studying caste, we uncover hidden inequities, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by South Asian communities living in Canada. The development of the Principles to Operationalize Community Engagement, Equity, and Sustainability in South Asian Health Research in Canada (PROCESS) framework funded by the Canadian Institute of Health Research advocates for the inclusion and leadership of South Asian communities, particularly those affected by caste, in academic health research. This initiative seeks to identify ethical practices to achieve health equity and develop guiding principles for culturally competent and effective research collaborations. Utilizing an intersectionality-informed qualitative design, our diverse team of South Asian academics, trainees, and community partners will employ purposive maximum variation sampling to capture a spectrum of perspectives, with a particular emphasis on caste-related experiences. Data will be analyzed through open coding and member-checking to develop principles for meaningful engagement. This work highlights the need to study caste-related health inequities, fosters balanced power dynamics, and promotes health equity for South Asian communities in Canada through inclusive, socially just research.

**Author keywords:** South Asian Health Equity, Caste, Research Justice, Canada

## **Abstract # ASys-12**

### **Title: From Caste Equity to Caste Abolition: Struggling Towards Begumpura**

**Authors & Affiliation:** Manmit Singh, Poetic Justice Foundation; University of British Columbia, Canada contact@manmitsingh.com; Anita Lal, Poetic Justice Foundation, contact@anitalal.com

#### **Abstract:**

Building from Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's teachings that "political revolutions have always been preceded by social and religious revolutions" given that "the emancipation of the mind and the soul is a necessary preliminary for the political expansion of the people," this paper brings together the overlaps, tensions, and contradictions between the Ambedkarite and Sikh tradition to ask: what lessons can be learned that guide us towards caste abolitionist futures? In other words, how do we imagine, but more importantly, how do we struggle and build towards Begumpura?

The paper draws on our experiences as community organizers working within anti-caste, South Asian, and Sikh movement spaces in the diaspora and employs a self-reflexive methodology to critically examine the challenges, possibilities, and lessons of building solidarity. By doing so, this paper will explore how the teachings and principles of Sikhi are being mobilized to imagine and build towards caste abolition.

While much of the anti-caste movement work in the diaspora has focused on furthering caste equity--an important and necessary pursuit--this paper reflects on the tensions between caste equity and the larger vision of caste abolition. Drawing from our organizing experiences, we examine how Sikhi has provided insights and strategies on how to navigate the gap between the two. By doing so, we think through what it means to move beyond equity towards abolition, and how we may resist co-optation of anti-caste work into frameworks that end up reproducing violence under the guise of reform.

Furthermore, the paper foregrounds the social and spiritual transformations that both precede, and emerge from, the process of working towards political transformation. Through the complexities of organizing across historical harms, differences, and disparities--where a sense of community is fragmented, absent, and yet-to-be-realized--we explore the challenges and possibilities of rethinking intersectionality and coalition-building. By doing so, we raise questions about who is deemed disposable, how do we navigate the interplay of hope and despair in the face of ongoing violences, and how do we insist on community even where it may not be reciprocated.

Lastly, by centering on Begumpura--an anti-caste articulation by Guru Ravidas Ji--as not merely a futuristic aspiration, but a present practice and cultivation, we argue that caste abolition requires more than just structural change. It demands an embodied commitment to building Begumpura in the present and in the everyday, through the ways we relate, organize, and imagine together. By grounding the analysis in Sikh and Ambedkarite teachings of holding the political and the spiritual as interconnected, the paper portrays the messiness of struggling towards equality and justice as a generative site of learning. Supplementing learnings from activism with academic and theoretical engagements from anti-caste studies, queer and trans studies, and ethnic and racial studies, this

paper reflects on the transformative potential of Dr. Ambedkar's vision of equality and justice in the 21st century.

**Author keywords:** Caste abolition, caste equity, Sikhi, Begumpura

## **Abstract # ASys-13**

**Title:** “With Liberty and Justice For All”: American Ideals and a Caste-free World

**Author:** Benjamin Welsh, Morgan State University, United States,  
benjamin.welsh@morgan.edu <http://www.morgan.edu>

### **Abstract:**

For at least two centuries, American ideals such as freedom and economic opportunity have attracted people from around the globe to America’s shores. What is rarely acknowledged and even overlooked by many immigrants is the simple fact that their adopted homeland is not what it purports to be, namely casteless. Consequently, an immigrant attempting to escape caste systems altogether by relocating to America ends up ensnared in another, completely different, caste system, that may be even more confusing, confounding, and cruel than the caste system of his or her birth country. Using historical, cultural lenses along with textual support, this presentation will shed new light on the origins of the American caste system, along with the myths that perpetuate the illusion of American castelessness. Included will be interpretation of ideals articulated by the founding fathers’ in the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution as well as those that were assumed and went unstated. Special attention will be paid to the ideas of liberty, Protestant Salvation, the common good, and Puritan communalism—the predominant cultural configuration operating in America at the time of its founding. Along the way, the continuum of culture, which juxtaposes individualistic cultures with collectivistic cultures, will be amended to permit analysis of communalistic cultural groups that maintain distinct borders. [word count: 212]

**Author keywords:** U.S. History, Puritans, liberty, salvation, communalism, continuum of culture, caste

## **Abstract # ASys-14**

### **Title: Global Legal and Policy Frameworks for a Caste-Free World**

**Author:** Ranjana Bishwakarma ([ranjana.bishwakarma@anu.edu.au](mailto:ranjana.bishwakarma@anu.edu.au)), Department of International Law and Diplomacy, Australian National University, Australia

#### **Abstract:**

The caste system is a deeply entrenched social hierarchy that perpetuates systemic inequality and exclusion; as a result, more than 250 million Dalits across the world have been compelled to live an inhuman life. While caste-based discrimination is widely condemned as a human rights violation, international legal frameworks fail to recognize caste as a distinct category and often subsume it under racial discrimination. This misclassification overlooks the structural nature of caste, limiting effective global interventions. This paper will examine the inadequacies of current legal and policy approaches and propose a required international framework for dismantling caste-based violations at the international level. First, it will argue that the absence of a dedicated UN convention or resolution on caste discrimination weakens legal accountability. A binding international framework, akin to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), would establish caste oppression as a global human rights violation. Second, it will highlight the need for institutional mechanisms, including a UN Special Rapporteur on Caste and a South Asian Regional Institution, and establish a dedicated mechanism to ensure systematic monitoring and accountability. Third, it will advocate for more vigorous enforcement measures, such as international sanctions on non-compliant governments and systematic documentation of caste-related violations to assess state compliance. Finally, as the caste system is the basis of the labor and work division, recognizing caste as a global issue within human rights mechanisms, at least in International Labor Organization (ILO) policies in South Asia, would integrate caste into labor rights and migration protections. These measures collectively aim to dismantle caste-based hierarchies and foster a genuinely caste-free world, reinforcing the principles of equality and human dignity.

**Author keywords:** Caste discrimination, International framework, global human rights mechanism, Labor rights, migration protection

## **Abstract # # ASys-15**

### **Title: Empowering Dalit Youth Through Digital Literacy**

**Authors:** Nitin Priyadarshi (nitinpriyadarshi70@gmail.com), Narendra Paswan  
mdnfnepal\_011@yahoo.com India, MDNF(Madheshi Dalit Ngo Federation)  
<https://www.mdnfnepal.org/>

#### **Abstract:**

This presentation will share insights from the work of Madheshi Dalit NGOo Federation (MDNF) in rural Nepal, where we have focused on education, empowerment, and social inclusion of Dalit communities. Post-COVID-19, we observed increased drop-out rates and a rise in discrimination due to poverty and caste-based stigma. Through targeted interventions such as providing bicycles, educational materials, and digital awareness programs, our grassroots initiative helped over 700 students return to school. We will present stories from the field, challenges faced by local volunteers, and the importance of culturally rooted solutions to caste oppression.

Caste-based discrimination remains a deeply embedded social issue in South Asia. This presentation will examine the intergenerational impact of caste on educational access, especially in rural communities. Drawing from real-life examples from the Terai region, we will discuss how caste, poverty, and gender intersect to limit opportunities. We also explore how NGOs can play a transformative role in breaking these cycles through strategic community involvement, leadership development, and cross-border partnerships. This session aims to spark dialogue on sustainable, inclusive development practices.

In this talk, we explore the connection between caste-based exclusion and mental health, especially among youth in marginalized communities. Using data and field experiences from our projects in southern Nepal, we highlight how discrimination not only limits social mobility but also affects identity, self-worth, and participation in public life. We advocate for integrating mental health support into educational and social justice initiatives, and propose collaborative frameworks that prioritize dignity, resilience, and healing for caste-affected populations.

This presentation will focus on youth-led advocacy and the rise of digital platforms as tools to challenge caste narratives. With the help of storytelling, videos, and online campaigns, young people from marginalized communities are reclaiming their identity and leading movements for justice. Our case study features a group of students trained by MDNF NGO who used media to amplify local voices and bring attention to caste-based exclusion in education and employment. Participants will learn how to initiate similar programs and use technology for social transformation.

**Author keywords:** Caste-based discrimination, Dalit empowerment, social justice, Educational equity, Grassroots activism, Inclusive development, Youth leadership, Marginalized communities, NGO initiatives, Human rights advocacy.

Submitted April 18, 2025.

**Abstract # # ASys-17 [POSTER PRESENTATION]**

**Title: Empowering Marginalized Communities Through Education and Inclusion:  
A Grassroots Case Study from Rural Nepal**

**Authors:** Nitin Priyadarshi, MDNF(Madheshi Dalit Ngo Federation), Nepal  
nitinpriyadarshi70@gmail.com

**Abstract:**

The persistence of caste-based discrimination continues to deny marginalized communities their fundamental rights and dignity across South Asia. In rural Nepal, structural casteism intersects with poverty, lack of access to education, and post-pandemic vulnerabilities, leading to exclusion and generational inequality. This paper presents a case study from Rautahat district where MDNF NGO has been working directly with Dalit communities to promote inclusive education, health, and social participation. Our approach included school re-enrollment drives, distribution of bicycles, notebooks, hygiene kits, and direct support to local teachers. These interventions have led to notable improvements in school attendance and confidence among students from historically excluded backgrounds. By highlighting our challenges, strategies, and successes, we aim to contribute to the global dialogue on dismantling caste hierarchies and advancing social justice through grassroots empowerment.

**Author keywords:** Caste-based discrimination, Dalit empowerment, Inclusive education, Grassroots development, Post-pandemic recovery, Rural Nepal, Educational equity, Social justice Intergenerational poverty, Marginalized communities, Bicycle distribution, Community mobilization, Gender and caste intersectionality, Youth leadership.

**Abstract #: ASys-18****Title: Caste-Based Discrimination, Untouchability and Justice in Nepal:  
Engagement of National, and International Laws**

**Author:** Trilok Chand Vishwas V K, Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NND SWO), Nepal <http://www.nndsw.org.np> [nationalpresident@nndsw.org.np](mailto:nationalpresident@nndsw.org.np)

**Abstract:**

The Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NND SWO), established in 1982, stands as Nepal's pioneering non-governmental organization committed to the rights, dignity, and empowerment of the Dalit community. Founded for Dalit movement, NND SWO envisions an inclusive society free from caste-based discrimination, exploitation, and poverty. Through grassroots mobilization, legal advocacy, and public campaigns, the organization has worked for over four decades to eliminate untouchability, strengthen access to justice, and uphold human rights for Dalit and other marginalized populations. Despite the existence of legal frameworks prohibiting caste-based discrimination in Nepal, the lived experiences of Dalit reflect persistent systemic injustice and social exclusion. NND SWO has actively documented, intervened in, and advocated justice for several grassroot level cases of caste-based violence that expose the enduring grip of structural inequality across Nepalese society. One of the most widely recognized and tragic cases are the Navaraj BK Massacre. On May 23, 2020, Navaraj BK, a 21-year-old Dalit youth from Jajarkot, and five of his friends were brutally murdered in West Rukum for inter caste relation on mutual understanding among boy and girl. The recent conviction on this case with 26 individuals, including 24 life sentences, marked a rare but significant victory for Dalit justice, reinforcing the importance of relentless advocacy by organizations like NND SWO. Similarly harrowing is the Sete Damai case from Dailekh district, where inter-caste marriage of his son led to Sete's murder in 2011. The Ajit Mijar case is emblematic of Nepal's failures in forensic investigation and justice delivery.

Children have not been spared from this violence. In 2020, Angira Pasi, a 12-year-old Dalit girl from Rupandehi, was found dead under suspicious circumstances. The 2021 death of Bhim Bahadur BK, a 58-year-old Dalit man from Chitwan, Samjhana BK, a teenage girl from Bajhang, was raped and murdered in 2020. Her attacker, previously known for similar abuse, remained unchecked until Samjhana's death. Dalit women face multifaceted oppression, as seen in the 2016 case of Laxmi Pariyar, who was publicly assaulted in Kavrepalanchok after being accused of witchcraft—a practice often weaponized against Dalit women. Several other cases highlight continuing patterns of forced displacement, systemic exclusion, and social ostracization including Ganesh Chandara, Mana Sarki, Sundar Harijan and Manbir Sunar. Women like Kalasa BK and Fulmaya Damai faced sexual exploitation, abandonment, and denial of paternity due to caste status.

NND SWO is working towards meaningful engagement of National and International Laws to grasp and address Dalit issues. NND SWO's efforts to document, mobilize, and advocate in these cases have played a pivotal role in holding perpetrators accountable and bringing national and international attention to Dalit human rights abuses. The continued presence on Universal Periodic Review (UPR), ICERD, and CEDAW through contribution is one the examples. This situation reveals an urgent need for structural transformation, including stronger legal implementation, victim protection programs, and public education to dismantle caste-based hierarchies. NND SWO calls upon the

state, civil society, and international allies to join in sustained action to end caste-based violence and ensure dignity, rights, and justice for all.

**Keywords:** Dalit, Caste Based Discrimination, Untouchability, Law and Policy

**Abstract #: ASys-19**

**Title:** Caste and Drought: How Caste-Based Institutions Shape Social Vulnerability to Climate Change in Nepal

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**Abstract:**

This study critically examines how caste-based institutions shape social vulnerability to climate change-induced drought in Chisapani, Nepal. Drawing on preliminary findings from interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation, it highlights how historical and ongoing caste hierarchies systematically constrain the adaptive capacity of marginalized groups, particularly Dalits. Legacy land tenure systems such as Birta, historically reserved for upper-caste Brahmins (Tagadharis), entrenched structural dispossession by relegating lower-caste groups to tenant farming on drought-prone uplands with minimal irrigation. These spatial disadvantages are compounded by caste-based untouchability norms that historically prohibited Dalits from touching communal drinking water sources, such as Padhera (springs), forcing them to rely on distant or rain-fed sources and heightening their exposure to drought-related hardships. Although caste discrimination has been formally abolished, caste hierarchies persist in local governance. Dalits remain underrepresented in institutions such as community forestry user committees, limiting their influence over resource allocation during droughts. Economic insecurity further exacerbates their vulnerability: many rely on informal loans and migration during crop failures. Both Dalit and Non-Tagadhari households report declining maize yields, yet face barriers in accessing climate-resilient technologies and support systems. While overt untouchability has declined, social exclusion persists through taboos around inter-caste marriage and participation in rituals (e.g., Kul Puja), restricting access to social networks vital for resilience. These preliminary insights reveal how formal policies and informal norms intersect to produce caste-differentiated climate vulnerabilities. The study calls for reparative adaptation strategies that redress land inequities, ensure inclusive governance, and integrate the knowledge of marginalized communities, offering a framework for caste-sensitive climate resilience in South Asia.

**Author keywords:** caste-based vulnerability, climate change adaptation, Nepal

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